Through the eyes of a child: How do children who have experienced domestic violence see their world?

By Morwenna Wagstaff

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of degree of Doctor in Educational Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

September 2009

Word count: 48,973

Contents Page

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Abstract

Domestic violence is a serious social problem that represents a cause of vulnerability for children and a risk to them achieving positive outcomes.

The aim of this study is to investigate the perception of children who have experienced domestic violence. In particular the study sought to examine: what the children identify as important, interesting and special; the issues of significance to them; and how their experiences of domestic violence have affected their perceptions of everyday life.

Five children (aged seven to 13) participated in the study. All the children lived in lone-mother families, with two residing in refuges. A combination of participant generated photographs, photo-elicitation interviews and participant observation was used over six sessions with each child, spanning a period of two to four months. The longitudinal approach enabled rapport to develop between the researcher and each child. Data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

All the children perceived family and friends as important sources of support - they created a sense of value and belonging, and promoted the innocence, fun and magic of childhood. Uncertainty, loss and change resulting from domestic violence had varying impact on each child. Of significance was that fathers were omitted from the children's photographs altogether and from much of their conversation. Complexities surrounding the children's understanding of their situations and their ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings were highlighted.

Of importance to Educational Psychologists is that children who experience domestic violence need time, space and support to communicate their perceptions and concerns meaningfully. Schools played a vital role in bolstering protective factors to help the children cope with adversity.

Declaration

I declare that the work undertaken in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the theses has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

This thesis has not been presented to any other University for examination in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed: MJ Daggstaff

Dated: 18·2·10

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the children who took part in this study. It was through their photographs and conversations that they shared their understanding and perceptions about their lives with me – it was a pleasure to have an opportunity to spend time getting to know them. I would also like to thank their mothers who welcomed me into their lives, and homes, whilst giving their children the space and privacy to talk. I wish them all happier times in the future. Thanks to Women's Aid for being the crucial link between the families and myself.

Thanks to Dr Pauline Heslop my academic supervisor who provided thorough, detailed feedback and guidance over the last two years. Thanks also to Kim Wagstaff and Laura Pratt for their editorial support.

Finally, special thanks must go to my husband Nathan for his immense kindness, tolerance and support throughout my doctoral training which has dominated the first year of our marriage. The best is yet to come.

I dedicate this study to my family and the memory of my father. All children have the right to a childhood filled with love and a sense of belonging. Thank you for mine.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The prevalence of children[1] who experience domestic violence in the United Kingdom (UK) is largely unknown due to the continued invisibility of the issue and consequent underreporting. However, estimates suggest that it is an *"alarmingly high"* number (Humphreys et al., 2008, p. 14).

Domestic violence can lead to a range of physical, emotional, psychological, social and economic consequences for the victims, most commonly women and their children. This study aims to gain a child's perspective on how children who have experienced domestic violence understand, negotiate and feel about their lives. It will explore the things that children who have experienced domestic violence consider as important, interesting and special to ascertain whether they lend further understanding about how, or if, they have been affected by their adverse experiences. It is through gaining further insight into areas such as their families, their relationships, and their responses to events, that those who care and support children, including professionals, will be able to provide more appropriate services and responses aimed at limiting the potentially devastating outcomes associated with domestic violence.

The nature of the study was determined through consideration of a number of key points outlined below. Firstly, the researcher was keen to complete a research study with children where each child would be considered as an *"unique and valued experiencer of his or her world"* (Greene and Hill, 2005, p. 3). As experience is about interpretation it is important that research with children attempts to interpret experiences through their eyes in order to better understand how they interpret, negotiate and feel about their lives (Greene and Hill, 2005). So in this study the children's meanings and interests were firmly positioned at the heart of the research process to enable insight into their lives and the issues that concern them (Ridge, 2003).

---

[1] The term 'children' will be used as shorthand to describe children, young people and infants.

A child's ability to understand and interpret the complexities surrounding domestic violence is limited by factors including their developmental, emotional and social understanding. Issues not apparent to the child may be highly significant to the adults involved and thus it was considered that this could present a bias to the researcher's interpretation of the child's perspective and the desire to be child-centred. The views of a parent about the nature of the domestic violence and how they think their child has been affected would potentially dilute the voice of the child, so the decision was made that data would only be collected from children.

Secondly, it was the intention that the children were in control of the content of the interviews and could present themselves to the researcher in the way that they wanted, so they could share the things that they felt were significant, interesting and important. This was partly to acknowledge the potential powerlessness experienced by children who have lived in situations where dominance and control by an adult have featured. It would not have been appropriate to attempt to mould the child's responses to fit the researcher's perception of the things that ought to be explored. Also due to the highly sensitive nature of domestic violence and potential vulnerability of the children, particularly those in refuges whose experiences were raw and traumatic, careful consideration of the ethical implications of such a study were employed. It was the researcher's aim to give the children time and space to talk about their lives in the hope that this may be beneficial for them (Laws, 2004).

By utilising interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) the dynamic process of research and the active role of the researcher are acknowledged (Smith and Osborn, 2003). This enables the researcher to be responsive to the child's contributions and interests. However, it requires awareness of the researcher's background and values to understand how these scaffold her interpretation of the children's experiences and perspectives (see Appendix A).

Thirdly, the researcher's substantial experience of working with children and more recently her role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) provided her with knowledge and understanding of child development, methods of interpersonal communication to engage and work with children, as well as psychological theories and research. This experience guided the decision to engage in a longitudinal piece of research where each child was visited six times over a

number of months. This was partly based on the practicalities involved in using cameras and photographs as research tools but mostly due to the fundamental need to develop rapport and trust with the children. This would be essential to enable a true and valid insight into their worlds. It was crucial that the children felt comfortable, were able to talk freely, were listened to and respected by the researcher.

1.1 Why Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is recognised as a serious social problem and a human rights violation. Children can be seriously affected by domestic violence and in the UK the link between domestic violence and child abuse is now recognised (Home Office, 2008; Welsh Assembly Government, 2005; Scottish Executive, 2000). Domestic violence is an issue high on the agenda of the current safeguarding legislation, the most prominent of which is the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2004). This represents a long-term strategy to promote and safeguard the well-being of all children in England and Wales. Domestic violence is a recognised area of vulnerability in the ECM agenda.

The potential damaging effects of experiencing domestic violence have been highlighted for the researcher whilst working as a TEP. It is not uncommon for children who are, or have experienced domestic violence to be referred for psychological assessment and intervention when presenting learning and/or social emotional and behaviour difficulties. In the researcher's experience the domestic violence is not always seriously considered to be a potential contributory factor by those who support and care for children, often dismissing its possible impact on their behaviour and learning needs. This lack of awareness of the potentially damaging effects of domestic violence means that often the needs of vulnerable children are overlooked. This can further increase a child's vulnerability and the risks of associated negative outcomes. Additionally, there is a general lack of support, resources and intervention for children who have been identified as experiencing, or having experienced domestic violence (Izzidien, 2008; Rivett and Kelly, 2006). The only clear route to such services seems to be via non-statutory agencies such as Women's Aid. Consequently many children cope with the adversity of experiencing domestic violence silently, and without appropriate support.

This study emerged out of a desire to enhance the understanding of the strategies that children use to cope, and the people or things from which they find support, comfort, strength and understanding. Everyone working with children is expected to meet the challenge set out in the ECM agenda to ensure all children achieve the universal ambitions (be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being). Domestic violence can seriously undermine these goals for children, so increased understanding is essential to enable the needs of all children to be met.

1.2 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine how experiences of domestic violence impact on the daily lives of the five child participants. The key research questions were:

- What is important, interesting and special to children who have experienced domestic violence?
- What is significant to the children?
- How do their experiences of being in a household where there was domestic violence affect their perceptions of everyday experiences including their understanding of relationships and response to events?

By addressing these research questions, the researcher aims to better inform professional working and the support offered to children who have experienced domestic violence.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis starts with a literature review in three parts. Part one considers the context of domestic violence with regards to adults, as well as definitions and potential impacts. Part two consists of exploring domestic violence with specific consideration of children and the potential impacts on them. Finally, part three examines the existing research about children and domestic violence, as well as studies exploring the perceptions of children and those specifically looking into children's perspectives of domestic violence. The Methodology is then explained in respect of its rationale, the considerable ethical issues, the process of data

collection and subsequent analysis. The findings have been organised into three chapters followed by the discussion and conclusions which aim to focus the findings within the parameters laid down by the research questions. This also provides an opportunity to reflect upon and consider the implications and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Part One - Domestic Violence

This first part of the literature review will illuminate the contexts of domestic violence with regards to the experiences of adults. This is because how children experience domestic violence is inextricably linked and implicated with the experiences of the adults who care for them (usually their mothers) (Warwick, 2004). This chapter explores the issue of domestic violence within the historical, multi-cultural and national contexts. It then clarifies the issues surrounding definition and terminology including consideration of the context of gender with regards to domestic violence. Finally it presents an overview of the types of domestic violence that adults can experience and some of the potential impacts.

2.1 The Historical Context

Domestic violence like any current phenomena should be considered in its historical context: it is not a new phenomenon. Leneman (1997) illustrated this in her comparison of modern domestic violence and the commissary court records of the 18th and 19th centuries where she highlighted that husbands were violent to their wives during these periods. Consideration must also be given to the patriarchal ethos and broader gender inequality of our society. Historically, a husband dominated his wife (George, 1994) and men had greater status, wealth, influence, control and power (see Scottish Executive, 2000; Dobash and Dobash, 1979).

Since the feminist activists of the 1960s and 1970s first brought violence against women into the public sphere there has been an increasing awareness and interest in the area (feminist theory will be discussed further in Chapter 5). This driving force led to a recognition of the extent and impact of the crisis of domestic violence on women's lives (Morran and Wilson, 1996). This has been accompanied by an increasingly vast body of literature about domestic violence against women across the world and the impact of domestic violence on women and their children.

2.2 The Multi-cultural Context: An International Violation of Human Rights

Domestic violence is prevalent worldwide and has emerged as one of the world's most pressing problems (Kimmel, 2002). Globally, it is recognised as an enormous social problem (Clements et al., 2008) and a serious public health issue (Radford, 2008; Mezey and Bewley, 1997). As estimates suggest that one in three women will suffer violence in their lifetime, it is a problem of pandemic proportions (Carrillo et al., 2003). Domestic violence is not limited to class or culture, any woman can experience domestic violence regardless of cultural, ethnic or religious group, age, disability or lifestyle (Abrahams, 2004; Mirrlees-Black, 1999; Dobash and Dobash, 1979).

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (United Nations, 1993) has been agreed by most of the world's governments with at least 45 nations, including the UK having specific legislation against domestic violence. This represents a monumental achievement which positions violence against women as a human rights violation (Carrillo et al., 2003).

> *Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. (Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations March 1999, as cited in Carrillo et al., 2003, p. 8)*

Izzidien (2008) highlighted that experiences of domestic violence are largely regarded as being the same irrespective of cultural context. In a study of South Asian communities she found that issues such as culture, language, family structures, racism and insecure immigration status can dramatically change the nature of the victim's experience, the support available, and the outcomes. Patel (2008) from the Southall Black Sisters highlighted the difficulties with the multicultural, and more recently multi-faith, social policy approaches in the UK. Instead of distinguishing between valid cultural demands, fundamental human rights assumptions are made:

> *that minority communities are homogeneous or monolithic entities, with no internal differences based on class, gender or even caste lines which give rise to differences of power and advantage (Patel, 2008, p. 12).*

Patel argued that such an approach is having a detrimental impact on women's struggle for greater freedom from violence in the UK and suggested that it needs to be understood as a violation of fundamental human rights, irrespective of the cultural or religious contexts. She highlighted how family structures and community dynamics in many minority communities are built on unequal power relations between men and women, legitimised by culture and religion which changes the experiences of domestic violence for both women and their children.

> *Women, in particular daughters in-law and children, are the most powerless in the family and have little or no right to assert their own wishes and desires (Patel, 2008, p. 29).*

2.3 The National Context: Domestic Violence in the UK

In the British Crime Survey 2007/2008 one in six violent incidents were domestic violence (Kershaw et al., 2008) with almost one in five women (19%) and one in ten men (10%) reporting experiences of physical force by a partner or ex-partner (Povey et al., 2008). As much goes unreported, it is not possible to precisely calculate the prevalence of domestic violence (Radford, 2008; British Medical Association, 2007).

Domestic violence at its most serious, results in death and this represents a significant contribution to female mortality rates: on average two women a week are killed by a current or former male partner (Home Office, 2008). Patel (2008) highlighted a particular concern for women from minority groups who had sought legal advice or mediation for issues including domestic violence, and were subsequently abducted, killed or maimed for bringing dishonour to their families and communities. Furthermore, Asian women are more likely to attempt and complete suicide due to pressures to conform to their cultural and religious identity (Patel, 2008). This makes the likelihood of appropriate support and advice, less likely and more risky.

2.4 What is domestic violence?

There is variation in the terminology used to describe domestic violence and it is important to ensure clarity in the way we think about the phenomena. Current terminology includes:

- family violence (Adams, 2006),
- woman abuse (Cunningham and Baker, 2007),
- battered women (Jarvis and Novaco, 2006; Stephens et al., 2000; Peled et al., 1995; Jaffe et al., 1990),
- gender-based violence and partner-violence (Carrillo et al., 2003),
- intimate partner violence (McDonald et al., 2009; Clements et al., 2008; Dutton and Corvo, 2006; Zlotnick et al., 2006; Kimmel, 2002; Dutton, 2000),
- intimate violence (Dutton and Nicholls, 2005),
- domestic abuse (Humphreys and Houghton, 2008).

The term 'domestic violence' is the most frequently used and widely accepted term in the UK (Holt et al., 2008; Abrahams, 2004) and will be used throughout this thesis.

Alongside variations in terminology come variations in definitions which are influenced by a wide variety of factors and vary according to the agendas of those creating them. It is for this reason that universal agreement is unlikely (Abrahams, 2004). Domestic violence has been defined as:

> *Coercive control of an adult by an intimate partner, involving physical, sexual, psychological and/ or financial abuse (Radford and Hester, 2006, p. 7).*
>
> *A pattern of controlling behaviour against an intimate partner or ex-partner, that includes but is not limited to physical assaults, sexual assaults, emotional abuse, isolation, economic abuse, threats, stalking and intimidation. Although only some forms of domestic violence are illegal and attract criminal sanctions (physical and sexual assault, stalking, threats to kill), other forms of violence can also have very serious and lasting effects on a person's sense of self, wellbeing and autonomy (Used by Women's Aid, Respect, 2004, p. 6).*

The UK Government's definition of domestic violence is:

> *Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality (Home Office, 2008).*

This includes issues of concern to black and minority ethnic communities such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage and so called 'honour killings' *(Home Office, 2008).* This definition does not explicitly acknowledge the effects on children unlike the Welsh Assembly Government report which includes in their definition of domestic violence: *"can also include violence inflicted on, or witnessed by, children"* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005, p. 6). Across the UK it is

accepted that children are affected by domestic violence and the link with child abuse is recognised (Home Office, 2008; Welsh Assembly Government, 2005; Scottish Executive, 2000).

The term domestic violence has been criticised for its gender neutrality and the emphasis on physical violence. Such criticism has led to suggestions that there should be a consideration of the context of domestic violence, and the issue of control to enable a true understanding of its nature (Johnson, 2006b). A review of the domestic violence literature highlighted the importance of distinctions among types or contexts of violence both to enhance understanding and query the tendency to generalise (Johnson and Ferraro, 2000). Johnson (1995) first suggested the possibility of multiple forms of partner violence and initially distinguished between 'patriarchal terrorism' and 'common couple violence' - where patriarchal terrorism involves acts of violence intended to control one's partner. More recently Johnson (2006b) has suggested that there are four types of partner violence defined conceptually in terms of the control motives of the violent member/s of the couple. Johnson repeatedly claims that research should make these distinctions to reflect the differences in causes, patterns of development, consequences and intervention required (Johnson, 2006b). The four types of partner violence are:

1 Situational couple violence - where although the individual is violent, neither the individual nor the partner is violent and controlling.

2 Intimate terrorism - where the individual is violent and controlling, but the partner is not. In heterosexual relationships this type of violence is almost exclusively perpetrated by males.

3 Violent resistance - where the individual is violent but not controlling; the partner is the violent and controlling one. In heterosexual relationships this type of violence is found almost exclusively among women.

4 Mutual violent control - where both the individual and the partner are violent and controlling.

Both situational couple violence and mutual violent control are gender symmetric (Johnson, 2006b) and offers some explanation for the claims of the mutuality of violence. Johnson claims that intimate terrorism is what is more commonly termed as domestic violence; that is primarily male-perpetrated and, in the case of heterosexual relationships, probably best understood through a feminist theory of

domestic violence (Johnson, 2006a). In contrast to situational couple violence, intimate terrorism is less common, more frequent, more likely to escalate and be severe (Johnson, 2006b).

Having considered the complex dilemmas facing both definition and terminology, for the purpose of this study, the term 'domestic violence' is used and defined in accordance with the Home Office (2008).

2.5 Gender Issues

Domestic violence is not only highly prevalent but also shows gendered patterns (Humphreys and Houghton, 2008). It is *"overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, enacted by men against women"* (Humphreys et al., 2008, p. 121). Most frequently women are the victims of domestic violence at the hands of men, and it is women who suffer the most persistent abuse and most severe injuries (Walby and Allen, 2004). Analysis of the nationally representative British Crime Survey of 2001, found that 89% of those who reported four or more incidents of domestic violence were women and that 81% of all violent incidents were attacks on women (Walby and Allen, 2004). More recent British Crime Survey statistics (2007/2008) suggest that 33% of violent incidents against women are domestic violence, compared to only 4% of men (Kershaw et al., 2008). This position is clarified by the following statement:

> *In a minority of cases, domestic violence does not reflect conventional power relations, for example where there is domestic violence in same sex relationships or where women are violent to male partners. Such cases are neither the same as - nor symmetrically opposite to - men's violence to women. (Respect, 2004, p. 7)*

Despite these apparently overwhelming gendered patterns of domestic violence there is some debate about the nature of domestic violence and the gender of the perpetrators (Kimmel, 2002). Results from a study by Dutton and Nicholls (2005) suggest that the gender disparity in domestic violence is less than originally portrayed by feminist theory. The study suggests that there are high levels of domestic violence by females to both males and females. However male victims are less likely to report it (Humphreys and Houghton, 2008) and tend not to view female violence against them as a crime (British Medical Association, 2007; Dutton and Nicholls, 2005).

While acknowledging that women use violence against men (Miller and Meloy, 2006; George, 1994) it is the case that this tends to be far less injurious, both emotionally and physically (Holt et al., 2008) and less likely to be motivated by attempts to dominate or terrorise (Kantor and Jasinski, 1998). Also the extent of violence against women far exceeds that of violence against men (Walby and Allen, 2004) and women are at far greater risk of serious and lethal abuse at the hands of men (Holt et al., 2008). This study does not aim to explore the nature of domestic violence experienced and will therefore offer an inclusive perspective whilst acknowledging the reality of domestic violence and its dominant gendered patterns.

2.6 Types of Domestic Violence and their Impact

The effects of domestic violence and abuse on victims are profound (Dodd, 2009). Domestic violence rarely consists of a single incident but "*typically involves an escalating pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour*" (Local Government Association, 2006, p. 2). There are many variations in the way that domestic violence can be experienced, and to varying degrees of severity. These can include:

- *Physical violence* - being hit, slapped, punched, kicked, and the use of weapons. In the worst cases this can lead to unconsciousness, miscarriages and death.
- *Emotional or mental cruelty* – such as persistent criticism, isolation, and the denial of privacy.
- *Sexual violence* - rape, sexual assault, degrading or humiliating sexual acts.
- *Other forms of abuse and controlling behaviour* - such as damage or theft of property, threats or violence to children or pets, denied access to work and financial restriction.

Consequently, domestic violence can lead to a range of physical, emotional, psychological, social and economic consequences for the victims, who are most commonly women and their children. These consequences can include:

- problems concentrating,
- feelings of shame, despair and hopelessness,
- flashbacks,
- anger,

- increasing likelihood of misusing drugs or alcohol,
- fear,
- sleep disturbance,
- depression,
- post-traumatic stress disorder,
- loss of self-confidence,
- feelings of isolation,
- panic or anxiety,
- eating disorders,
- and wanting to, or actually attempting suicide (Dodd, 2009; Department of Health, 2005; Mezey and Bewley, 1997).

The psychological impact on a woman's emotional health and wellbeing was illustrated in Dodd's study (2009) where all the women interviewed reported mental health support needs related to their experiences of domestic violence.

Summary

Domestic violence is recognised as a serious, worldwide social problem and a human rights violation. The consideration of different types of violence present within couples enables the possibilities recently suggested about the gender mutuality of violence to be taken into account, without undermining the historical feminist stance. Domestic violence (or 'intimate terrorism' as described by Johnson, 2006b) is defined by the use of control by one partner and is typically gendered with male perpetrators and female victims. Experiences of domestic violence are varied and can include physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, usually over a prolonged period of time with increasing severity. The potential consequences can impact on all aspects of life for the victim.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

Part Two - Domestic Violence and Children

The previous chapter provided a brief overview of the historical and social complexities of domestic violence including clarification of terminology and definition. This chapter will look at domestic violence specifically in the context of children. Over the last 30 years research into the area of children's exposure to domestic violence has gradually increased and continues to at an exponential rate (Holden, 2003).

A number of areas of significance to this study will be explored in order to provide an oversight of relevant research findings and to locate it within the current context in the UK. Firstly, there will be exploration of the legislative framework set out to safeguard children, the prevalence of domestic violence for children as well as the use of language, followed by consideration of the different ways children experience domestic violence, the potential impact upon their development, and the complexities of domestic violence occurring alongside other adversities.

3.1 Legislation and Policy Relating to Children and Domestic Violence

Historically domestic violence was seen as a problem between adults. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by the UK in 1991 outlines the rights of all children. Although domestic violence is not specifically mentioned, a number of articles refer to rights that may be violated or undermined by domestic violence. These include:

- the right to protection from abuse and neglect,
- the right to education, leisure and free association,
- the need to promote physical and psychological recovery, and social reintegration of a child victim of abuse,
- and the right to express an opinion and have that opinion taken into account (Unicef, 2008).

It has only been in the last decade that policy has specifically mentioned children in relation to domestic violence. Subsequently, it has climbed the political agenda

and has been recognised as a cross-government priority (British Medical Association, 2007). In the UK the Children Act 1989 highlighted the principle of child welfare and introduced a new approach to working with children (Hester et al., 2007). The Children Act 2004 and the ECM agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) represent a long-term strategy to promote and safeguard the well-being of all children, under five universal ambitions: to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being. The potential, serious and enduring consequences of living in a household where domestic violence is present are identified as a cause of vulnerability in ECM (Department for Education and Skills, 2004). ECM underpins the work of all professionals working with children; it promotes integrated working between services and the sharing of information to ensure that all children are able to achieve the five key outcomes.

The collaborative publication 'Vision for Services for Children and Young People Affected by Domestic Violence' (Local Government Association, 2006) provides a framework based on research evidence and best practice to ensure that the range of needs that children experience in relation to domestic violence are identified and addressed. It outlines the negative impact of domestic violence against the five ECM outcomes. For example, how the outcome for children to 'enjoy and achieve' is impaired for those experiencing domestic violence if they cannot concentrate in school and struggle to maintain peer relationships. However, the most recent legislation, the Children's Plan recognises the need to *"secure the wellbeing and health of children"* (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007, p. 17) but does not specifically mention domestic violence.

It has been suggested that service provision for children has not increased even in the wake of this recent legislation and policy (Izzidien, 2008; Rivett and Kelly, 2006). Despite findings that suggest a need for post domestic violence therapeutic services (Jarvis and Novaco, 2006) there continues to be a general lack of support for children who have experienced domestic violence unless their parents access non-statutory agency support such as Women's Aid on their behalf. Slowly, some interventions are emerging, for example a recently evaluated therapeutic group work intervention for mothers and children (see Dodd, 2009) and are being trialled nationwide.

3.2 The Prevalence of Children Affected by Domestic Violence

As already mentioned domestic violence is a *"widespread, chronic and serious social problem"* (Humphreys et al., 2008, p. 14). However, despite the recognition and increasing awareness that many children are involved in situations where domestic violence occurs, there is a dearth of accurate information about how many children are exposed to domestic violence (Holt et al., 2008; Fantuzzo and Mohr, 1999). From the limited data available the number of children who live in households with domestic violence is estimated to be *"alarmingly high"* (Humphreys et al., 2008, p. 14).

This information becomes increasingly concerning when faced with findings that:

- In almost nine out of every ten cases (up to 86 %) of domestic violence there are children present in the same or adjacent room while the violence is happening (Webster et al., 2002).
- The risk of domestic violence is nearly doubled if there are children in the household (Walby and Allen, 2004).

Consequently, domestic violence is clearly more than just an issue for adults; it is a very serious and widespread issue for children and young people too.

3.3 Use of Language

In the previous chapter the variations in terminology were examined. Suggestions that the lack of common terminology and definitions has somewhat impeded efforts to understand the scope and nature of domestic violence (Holden, 2003) lead us to consider the language used to describe a child's involvement. Children were historically described as 'observers' and 'witnesses' to domestic violence; the terms 'exposure to', 'experiencing' and 'living in situations with' domestic violence have been more readily used recently. There are suggestions that the terms 'exposure to' or 'living with' are better than both 'witnessed' or 'observed' because they are more inclusive of different types of experiences and make fewer assumptions about the children's experiences (Warwick, 2004; Holden, 2003). Children are neither untouched by the violence, nor merely passive bystanders, but can be involved at a number of levels (Fantuzzo and Mohr, 1999). To claim that a child has merely witnessed domestic violence implies passivity which is an *"erroneous assumption"* (Warwick, 2004, p. 34). For further exploration of the

definitional issues surrounding children's exposure to domestic violence see Holden (2003).

3.4 How do Children Experience Domestic Violence?

As already discussed domestic violence rarely consists of a single incident but typically involves escalating patterns of abusive and controlling attitudes and behaviour. Research shows that children are involved in a myriad of ways when they live in households with domestic violence (Humphreys et al., 2008). These can include some the following outlined by Cunningham and Baker (2007):

- being physically caught up in the violence,
- hearing or seeing conflict and violence, sometimes this is forced,
- exposure to the aftermath (for example, injuries and damage to property),
- being encouraged by the abusive parent to join in the abuse,
- being threatened or held hostage to force compliance,
- being interrogated about their parent's activities or whereabouts,
- trauma from professional involvement or fleeing,
- multiple losses (for example, leaving their home, their friends and their community),
- and being told their behaviour is the reason for the abuse.

This list is not exhaustive but illustrates the many diverse ways that children can experience domestic violence.

It is recognised that domestic violence has a range of potentially negative effects on children such as poor educational achievement, social exclusion, juvenile crime, substance abuse, mental health problems and homelessness (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005). Experiences for children from minority groups can also include them being used as *"pawns"*, and being abducted or taken abroad by wider family members (Izzidien, 2008, p. 7). The complexities for children in the UK with regards to differences in culture, faith and community directly affect their experiences of domestic violence. This is highlighted below with specific focus on South Asian communities:

> *The patriarchal constructs of Izzat (honour) and Sharam (shame) are very powerful, fuelling fears about potentially incurring the wrath of the extended family and losing access to children. Even if an abused woman manages to break free from her (extended) family, she may fear being relocated to an unfamiliar area, or may face separation from children or deportation if her immigration status is insecure (Izzidien, 2008, p. 3).*

For the purpose of this study it was felt that the distinctions between the different ways that children can experience domestic violence should be explored to enable a clearer perspective on the realities of children's lives. This is not to imply that children can be placed neatly into one of these categories, or that the categories do not overlap. Three situations in which children can experience domestic violence are focused on: domestic violence and child abuse, children witnessing domestic violence, and children living in households with domestic violence.

3.4.1 Domestic Violence and the Direct Abuse of Children

In households where there is domestic violence children are more vulnerable to being physically abused either intentionally or by getting caught up in the violence aimed at another adult (Humphreys et al., 2001). They are also at an increased risk of physical abuse from the non-abusing parent (usually the mother) who is herself subjected to domestic violence (O'Keefe, 1995). Estimates suggest that in half of the cases of violence between adults there is also violence against children (Webster et al., 2002). The interconnectedness of domestic abuse and child abuse is well established and has been frequently reported (see Devaney, 2008; Herrenkohl et al., 2008; Holt et al., 2008; Humphreys, 2007; Cunningham and Baker, 2004; Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Humphreys et al., 2001; Edleson, 1999). It is acknowledged in legislative documentation across the UK (Home Office, 2008; Welsh Assembly Government, 2005; Scottish Executive, 2000). This connection is not surprising when you consider that:

> *At the heart of domestic violence is the abusive exercise of power, which inevitably pervades the whole family (The Children's Rights Alliance for England and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2008, p. 27).*

At its most basic level, living with the abuse of a parent can be considered emotional abuse with potential negative implications for the emotional health, well-being and future relationships of children (Brandon and Lewis, 1996). Where it is believed that a child is being subjected to abuse those involved should be alert to the possibility that there may also be domestic violence within the family (Department of Health, 2005) with potentially far reaching implications.

3.4.2 Children Witnessing Domestic Violence

Concerns about the effects of witnessing domestic violence for children were first raised by front line workers often in refuges who saw children's distress first hand (see Mullender and Morley, 1994). Studies show that the majority of children living in households where there is domestic violence do witness incidents of violence (Mullender and Hague, 2001; Jaffe et al., 1990). Children may be greatly distressed by witnessing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent or carer (British Psychological Society, 2007) with findings suggesting that witnessing violence towards a parent (mother) can have a detrimental impact equal to that of emotional abuse or psychological maltreatment (Hester et al., 2007). In acknowledgement of this, in January 2005 the legal definition of harm to children was changed to include the impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. However, as already mentioned obtaining up-to-date information that quantifies how many children are affected in this way is difficult. Estimates that at least 750,000 children living in England and Wales witness domestic violence each year have been suggested (Cleaver et al., 1999).

3.4.3 Children Living in Households with Domestic Violence

Alongside both direct abuse of children and indirect experience via witnessing domestic violence, is the growing recognition of the harmful consequences for children living in violent homes. In the past it was thought that as long as children were not in the same room and caught up in the violence going on between the adults in the household, they were not affected by it (Webster et al., 2002). This has meant that the impact on children of living in households with domestic violence has been minimised. Research suggesting the impacts on children living in a household where there was domestic violence, was conducted by Jaffe et al (1990). They found that almost all the children interviewed could give detailed descriptions of violence that their parents were not aware they had witnessed and suggest that children are significantly affected and experience considerable distress (see also Cleaver et al., 2008; Radford, 2008; Cunningham and Baker, 2007; McGee, 2000; Brandon and Lewis, 1996; Mullender and Morley, 1994).

Children's awareness of the tensions between adults, was illustrated by the powerful stories in Webster's (2002) publication 'Bitter Legacy':

It is clear that children are not deceived by closed doors. They are acutely aware of tension in the adult world, particularly tension that leads to violence ('Bitter Legacy', Webster et al., 2002, p. 2).

3.5 The Experiences of the Children in the Current Study

It can be difficult to identify and distinguish children's experiences of domestic violence. With regards to the participants in this study, data about the nature, severity and onset of the violence was not collected, nor was the exact involvement of the children. Thus the only given was that the children lived in households where domestic violence occurred. They may, or may not have additionally witnessed domestic violence or been physically abused themselves. However, in light of the findings about the interrelatedness of child abuse and domestic violence, this study aims to consider the past experience of domestic violence as a holistic experience for the child participants, thus not making any assumptions.

3.6 The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

Alongside the increased awareness that many children are involved at different levels in incidents of domestic violence, there is also growing understanding of the risks that it presents to these children (Webster et al., 2002) and the impact on their lives and future well-being (Hester et al., 2007). There is a substantial accumulation of research which demonstrates that exposure to domestic violence can have a differential yet potentially detrimental impact on various aspects of children's lives both in the short-term and in the long-term (Dodd, 2009; Holt et al., 2008; Mullender et al., 2002; McGee, 2000; Edleson, 1999; Kolbo et al., 1996).

In this study the five participants were between the ages of seven and 13 years old so the selected literature will reflect this. There are many detailed explorations of the potential impact of domestic violence across children's development, from pre-natal to teenagers (see Cunningham and Baker, 2007; Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007; Stover et al., 2006; Cunningham and Baker, 2004; Levendosky et al., 2002) but this is beyond the scope of this report. The following section has been organised to facilitate comprehension of the vast literature available in this area, it is not to suggest that the complexities surrounding children who have experienced

domestic violence can, or should be separated in a similar manner. The wide range of behaviours and consequences associated with domestic violence indicate that the relationship between experiences and possible impacts is complex (Edleson et al., 2007) and that each child should be considered individually, within the context of their wider social, cultural and family situation. Here the potential impacts on the physical and health, emotional and behavioural, and social development of children, will be explored with reference to selected literature to better understand the short and long-term risks for those who have experienced domestic violence.

3.6.1 Physical and Health Impacts

The most obvious physical and health implications are associated with direct child abuse, or situations where children accidentally get in the way of an attack or attempt to intervene to protect their parent, and risk injury and in some cases, death (Cunningham and Baker, 2007, 2004; Morley and Mullender, 1994). In a study of 200 women's experiences of domestic violence it was found that 60% of the women had left the abusive situation because they feared that they or their children would be killed by the perpetrator (Humphreys and Thiara, 2003). Although somewhat dated, Hanmer's (1990) findings that children intervened in one third of domestic violence incidents reported in West Yorkshire is powerful, even more so when learning that in one case a two year old child *"picked up a shoe and hit him with it"* (Hanmer, 1990, p. 26).

3.6.2 Emotional and Behavioural Impacts

Aside from injuries children can present physical signs of emotional distress, such as bedwetting, stomach aches and disturbed sleep (Webster et al., 2002). McGee (2000) highlighted maternal reports of short and long-term health problems of their children that they believed were related to their experiences of domestic violence. These included: asthma, eczema, eating problems, headaches, stomach pains, and sleep problems. However, due to the qualitative nature of such studies the exact associations between domestic violence and health problems is difficult to determine (Adams, 2006). In a recent pilot study Humphreys et al (2009) interviewed 17 women to explore of the interrelationship between domestic violence and sleep for both women and their children Findings suggested that

children's sleep can be affected in many ways including bedwetting, nightmares and night waking which can have potentially serious consequences for their ability to concentrate when awake. The study also *"highlighted the entwining of the women's recovery with that of their children"* (Humphreys et al., 2009, p. 12).

There is evidence that children who experience domestic violence may suffer from physiological symptoms related to emotional trauma. In a study by El-Sheikh et al (2001) of 75 children (aged eight to 12) suggestions that changes in the parasympathetic nervous system in children exposed to domestic violence may account for increased physiological arousal. This influences internalising behaviours such as somatic complaints, sleep disturbances, and social withdrawal, as well as externalising behaviours such as, temper tantrums, aggression, and cruelty to animals. A study by Saltman et al (2005) of 48 six-year old children reported that heart rates among those who had witnessed domestic violence were significantly higher than those of children who had not. The findings from these studies could suggest that children who experience domestic violence may endure a perpetual state of hyper-vigilance and hyper-arousal, thus being at higher risk of anxiety-related concerns.

The British Psychological Society (2007) states that children's exposure to adult conflict even where there is no physical violence, can lead to serious anxiety and distress. This can have a significant impact on their development and emotional well-being. Research suggests that about 40% of children living in households with domestic violence exhibit clinically significant emotional and behavioural problems (Harold and Howarth, 2004) and are at higher risk for a variety of negative outcomes (Harold, 2007; Kitzmann et al., 2003; Webster et al., 2002). Jarvis et al (2005) found that children who had experienced domestic violence showed more fear and distress in response to simulated adult anger than those with no history of family violence.

In Dodd's (2009) study exploring therapeutic group work for mothers and children who had experienced domestic violence. Mothers reported that their children had behavioural difficulties which included:

- problems sharing and socialising,
- being less responsive, too quiet and passive,
- exhibiting angry, aggressive, difficult behaviours,
- and developmental delay, particularly in language skills.

The complex emotions of fear and shame are typically associated with domestic violence (Local Government Association, 2006) and are likely to be experienced by all those involved, including children. Due to the ongoing patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour involved in domestic violence, children may feel that they are to blame in some way for the situation (Cunningham and Baker, 2007; Webster et al., 2002). Most children have difficulty understanding why the violence occurs and many are discouraged from talking about it (Mullender, 2004). They may therefore conclude that their behaviour has somehow influenced the violence either through their own attempts to rationalise what is happening, or through being told this is the case by the perpetrator. Regardless of how, the child's self-concept is negatively reinforced with further potentially significant emotional damage. The possible effects on older children can mean that they become withdrawn or exhibit problematic behaviour which can include: absenteeism, ill health, bullying, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm, running away and attempting suicide (British Psychological Society, 2007; Webster et al., 2002). There is evidence that has linked the experiences of domestic violence as a child with longer term emotional impacts such as: higher levels of adult depression and trauma symptoms, lower self-esteem and increased tolerance for and use of violence in adult relationships, post traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and drug misuse, and criminal offending (Dodd, 2009; Kerig et al., 2000; Fergusson and Horwood, 1998).

As a result of the domestic violence children may also have to contend with other emotionally damaging situations. These may include the disruption associated with fleeing and temporary homelessness, a change of physical location, loss of friends, pets and personal belongings, continued harassment by the perpetrator, and the stress of making new relationships (Worrall et al., 2008). Often despite the domestic violence experienced, children may still love and miss the perpetrator (Webster et al., 2002).

A further insight into the emotional impact on children is possible when we consider some of the unhealthy lessons children may learn from living in households with domestic violence. Cunningham and Baker (2004) suggest the following:

- violence and threats get you what you want,
- a person has two choices - to be the aggressor or be the victim,
- victims are to blame for violence,
- when people hurt others, they do not get in trouble,
- women are weak, helpless, incompetent, stupid, or violent,
- anger should be suppressed because it can get out of control,
- and unhealthy, unequal relationships are normal or to be expected.

3.6.3 Social Impacts

Friendships create an entry-point into wider social relationships and networks; playing a role as a social asset both in childhood and beyond. Conversely, difficulties in making and sustaining social relationships can leave children vulnerable to social exclusion (Ridge, 2003; Ridge and Millar, 2000). Domestic violence can impact on children's abilities to make friends and develop social networks. A impaired ability to forge good quality friendships with peers can result in not experiencing good social interaction, which can increase the risk of poor emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties later in life (Howe, 2005). Children value friends for the obvious reasons, such as play and sociability, but also for more complex reasons such as protection and to safeguard from isolation and bullying (Ridge, 2003). Friends and relationships with peers can be children's best support often providing something different to adults (Houghton, 2008) to meet their emotional needs, and may be the only person that a child has actively told about the domestic violence at home (McGee, 2000).

Through examination of the many potential physical and health, emotional, behavioural and social impacts of domestic violence, it is not surprising that children may often have: lower cognitive functioning, poor educational engagement and achievement, a lack of conflict resolution and problem solving skills, pro-violence attitudes, and beliefs in rigid gender stereotypes (Dodd, 2009; Carlson, 2000). Together this can lead to social and educational development of

some children who have experienced domestic violence being impaired (Gorin, 2004).

The current study hopes to offer some insight into how children who have experienced domestic violence understand and perceive the world that they inhabit. This study aims to respect each child's views and interpretations of their current situation while attempting to better understand how they have coped and survived such adversity.

3.7 Domestic Violence and Other Adversities

Research consistently documents how domestic violence rarely occurs in isolation (Cleaver et al., 2008; Dong et al., 2004). Households where there is domestic violence are also likely to be affected by other adversities such as: parental substance or alcohol misuse, criminal behaviour, mental illness, poverty, residential instability, unemployment, and as already discussed, child abuse (Devaney, 2008; Buckley et al., 2007; Cunningham and Baker, 2007; Rossman, 2000). Rossman (2000) used the term 'adversity package' to describe the multiple stressors which cluster together in the lives of most children who experience domestic violence. Unsurprisingly, the presence of multiple stressors increases the risk for negative outcomes.

Ferguson and Horwood's (2003) longitudinal study (spanning 21 years) of over one thousand children born in New Zealand in 1977 found that with increasing exposure to childhood adversities there were increases of both internalising and externalising problems in both adolescence and young adulthood. However, distinguishing the exact relationship between the experience of domestic violence and the impact of other adversities is very difficult, so what may seem to be the result of a single risk factor may in fact be the result of several other co-occurring adversities (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007; Jones et al., 2002).

3.7.1 Parenting Capacity

There is mixed research evidence regarding the impact of domestic violence on parenting ability (Buckley et al., 2007). The physical, emotional and psychological abuse suffered by the non-abusing parent can be detrimental to parenting (British

Psychological Society, 2007; Hester et al., 2007; Humphreys et al., 2001). It can cause them to become depressed, distracted and emotionally drained and more vulnerable to mental health support needs. For example, mothers of children exposed to domestic violence appeared to have higher levels of depression (Letourneau et al., 2007). This can reduce their ability to be emotionally available, attentive and sensitive to their children's needs (Holden and Ritchie, 1991) and to provide firm, consistent and responsive parenting. Further strains on the mother-child relationship can also include being forced to leave their home, communities and families. This can impact upon their cultural identity and sense of belonging (Humphreys and Houghton, 2008) which are recurring themes in black and minority ethnic research (Mullender et al., 2002). However, recent research in this emotive area suggests that mothers of preschool-age children exposed to domestic violence may demonstrate compensatory behaviour and be more sensitive and responsive to their children than other parents (Letourneau et al., 2007).

Parenting can be undermined by the outcome of domestic violence (see Humphreys et al., 2006; Mullender et al., 2002). Rivett and Kelly (2006) claim that child protection agencies may replicate the historical patriarchal ethos of society by holding the victim (usually the mother) responsible for the children's well-being. Further exploration of parenting capacity within the context of attachment theory will be considered in Chapter 5.

Summary

Domestic violence has the potential to violate a number of children's rights. The seriousness of the concerns for children means that domestic violence is now recognised in legislation and policy. The Children Act 2004 and ECM agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) represent the UK's long-term strategy for all children which recognises domestic violence as a serious risk factor for children to achieve positive outcomes.

The current literature surrounding domestic violence and children suggests that there are potentially very high numbers of children who experience domestic violence in many different ways including direct and indirect experiences. Evidence suggests that even where children are thought not to have witnessed

domestic violence they are often very aware of the tensions and violence within their household than those around them assume. The experience of domestic violence and children's individual responses can vary greatly and consequently there is a vast array of potential negative implications for children. These include short and long-term consequences across areas including: physical, emotional, behavioural and social wellbeing. Furthermore, as domestic violence rarely occurs in isolation children are at additional risk from other adversities which may also be present.

Chapter 4 - Literature Review

Part Three - Research with Children

Historically, children were viewed as objects of research rather than subjects (Greene and Hill, 2005). Such thinking has been challenged through the rapidly developing social studies of childhood (Hill, 2005) where children are considered as a social group whose experiences are structured by wider policies and practices and whose everyday behaviour is policed and directed by adults (Shakespeare and Watson, 1998). This 'sociology of childhood' sees children as active agents who play a part in shaping their own lives (Goodenough et al., 2003; Connors and Stalker, 2002) and directs society to take their views far more seriously.

Until recently the voices of children were seldom sought or heard in decision-making or academic research (The Children's Rights Alliance for England and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2008). The last decade has seen major changes and the current prominence of children's rights has been fuelled by the UK's adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Of particular interest is Article 12 which acknowledges a child's right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them (Unicef, 2008). This has led to a *"mushrooming of participation activity"* (Kilby et al., 2003, p. 145) highlighting children's entitlement to be *"actors in their own lives"*, rather than passive recipients of adult care and protection (Lansdown, 2005, p. 1). This focus on listening to children is reflected in legislation including the ECM agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) and the Children's Plan (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007) which highlight the need for services to be shaped by and responsive to children and young people. Despite this increased interest there has been little research that involves listening to children about their experiences of domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2002). This chapter will explore:

- research about children and domestic violence,
- research with children that has focused on their perspectives of living with issues such as poverty and single-parent families,
- and research with children about domestic violence.

4.1 Research about Children and Domestic Violence

Over the last 30 years there has been an unprecedented interest in the scope and consequences of children's exposure to domestic violence (Holt et al., 2008). This has resulted in a range of quantitative research and empirical knowledge about domestic violence and its impact in areas that have included:

- sleep disruption (Humphreys et al., 2009),
- the presence of symptoms related to mental illness, for example, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and trauma (Allwood and Bell, 2008; Sternberg, Baradaran et al., 2006; Sternberg, Lamb et al., 2006; Levendosky et al., 2002; Reynolds et al., 2001),
- mothering (Letourneau et al., 2007),
- play (Stover et al., 2006),
- animal cruelty (Currie, 2006; Becker and French, 2004),
- and psychological and physiological functioning (Harold, 2007; Saltzman et al., 2005; El-Sheikh et al., 2001).

However, much of the focus of this interest and understanding has largely been achieved through clinical samples, and eliciting adult views from parents, refuge workers and other professionals. They have not focused on listening to children and have subsequently been studies 'about', rather than 'with' children (Alderson, 1995). Such studies presume that children's views are represented by the adults around them, although usually this is not the case (Alderson, 1995) and children often have very different priorities and concerns to adults (Gorin, 2004).

Studies examining the impact of children's exposure to domestic violence have been beleaguered with methodological concerns and complications (Holt et al., 2008). As already discussed the experience of domestic violence is not a *"homogeneous uni-dimensional phenomenon"* (Jouriles et al., 1998, p. 178). Children have unique experiences so the impact can not be examined without consideration of the wider context of the child's life and the presence of other adversities. Other criticisms include the over-sampling of participants from refuges who are often the most severely and most recently affected by domestic violence and who may be over-representative of a low socio-economic population (Kashani and Allan, 1998). The consideration that life in a refuge can be a unique and

stressful influence on children (Holt et al., 2008) further emphasises the potential criticisms of using this population.

The experience of violence can be considered to be subjective. Thus it is important to explore the individual perspective of those (in this study the children) who have experienced it. The intention of the current study is to explore the understanding and perceptions of children who have experienced domestic violence in relation to their lives, post violence. Hence, studies which have taken a qualitative approach to research with children to explore their perceptions across a variety of related phenomena will now be considered.

4.2 Researching with Children to Explore their Perspectives

Studying children's understandings of the social conditions and contexts of childhood is an important precondition for policies that aim to ensure children lead satisfying lives (Mayall, 2000). The prominence of children's rights and the fast-developing social studies of childhood have challenged conventions of how adults think of children and as a result approaches to children's research are diversifying (Hill, 2005). The interest in researching children's experiences can:

> *be allied to a moral perspective on the role and status of children which respects and promotes their entitlement to being considered as persons of value and persons with rights (Greene and Hill, 2005, p. 3).*

As experience is about interpretation (Greene and Hill, 2005) it is important that research with children attempts to understand experiences through their eyes in order to better understand how they interpret, negotiate and feel about their lives. Beaver (1996) states that an individual's model of their world equates to their version of reality and it is this that we wish to explore in order to better understand how children perceive and understand the worlds they inhabit. However, it is important to be mindful of the differences and that each child encounters their world in an individual and idiosyncratic manner (Greene and Hill, 2005). A researcher of children's experiences must have *"respect for each child as a unique and valued experiencer of his or her world"* (Greene and Hill, 2005, p. 3).

In child-centred research, children's meanings and interests are firmly positioned at the centre of the process to enable insight into their lives and the issues that

concern them (Ridge, 2003). It requires an informed and considered approach where skills and sensitivity to establish rapport, openness and trust are exercised. The onus is on the researcher to make the process of research *"an experience which is at best fun, and at worst does no harm"* (Roberts, 2000, p. 238). The following four selected studies provide insights into research with children that are relevant to the current study.

4.2.1 Study One

A European-Union funded study in England, Greece and Cyprus by Walker et al (2008) explored children's experiences of poverty and social exclusion in single-parent families. Research methods included focus groups and semi-structured interviews with children aged six to 16 years old. Detailed discussion guides and open-ended questions were used flexibly so that the children could express their thoughts and feelings, and describe their views and attitudes. The significant impact of poverty and social exclusion was demonstrated as was the connection between their experiences and those of their parents:

> *The interdependency of children's lives with that of their parent inevitably means that certainly unhappiness of the parent will be felt by the child (Walker et al., 2008, p. 435).*

4.2.2 Study Two

Ridge (2007) explored child experiences and perceptions of living in low-income, working lone-mother households in England. It was a longitudinal study and 50 low-income mothers and 61 of their children (aged between eight and 14 years old) were interviewed twice between 2004 and 2005. The exploration of children's perspectives and views of their mother's return to work highlighted three types of strategies employed by the children to manage and negotiate the changes in their lives. These were: assuming extra responsibilities, moderating and policing their own needs, and accepting and tolerating adverse situations. The children recognised the challenges facing their lone-parents and wanted to help them cope. Such strategies which relate to changes may reflect potential responses employed by children where domestic violence has, or is being experienced.

4.2.3 Study Three

An American study by Clark-Ibanez (2007) explored the social worlds of inner-city children in poor neighbourhoods in Los Angeles. The study used photo-elicitation interviews where the children were considered creative and important actors in their own right, and collected images to shape discussion about their experiences and issues of interest to them. The use of photographs aimed to prompt *"reflections that words alone cannot"* (Clark-Ibanez, 2007, p. 171). The findings represented creativity and resiliency on the part of the child participants. Clark-Ibanez (2007) used participant observation prior to engaging children with photo-elicitation interviews, she spent almost a year engaged in intensive participant observation of the children in their schools and taking them on outings in order to immerse herself in their lives to gain further understanding. Although such unstructured observation can not provide any data for comparisons between participants, it offered details about the behaviour of individuals in particular settings (Foster, 1996).

4.2.4 Study Four

The final child-centred study was again by Ridge (2003) who explored the social, economic and relational repercussions of poverty on children's everyday lives and wellbeing. It was called the 'Listening to Children' study and aimed to understand and acknowledge children's perceptions and meanings around the dangers of social exclusion and poverty in childhood. The study consisted of in-depth, flexible unstructured interviews with 40 children between ten and 17 years of age who lived in families on Income Support in the UK. Issues around rapport building, developing openness and trust were significant. The importance of, and the role of friends was highlighted alongside the impact this can have on children's views of school and of themselves. Other relevant findings were the children's belief that they could protect their parents from the realities of the social and economic costs of poverty on their lives as children. The study highlighted that children are *"active social agents"* (Ridge, 2003, p. 9) and the need for a more holistic approach to understanding children's lives.

To gain the essential child's perspective on issues that impact upon them, children themselves need to participate in research. The four studies outlined explored

features present in many children's lives: living in a single-parent families, financial hardship or poverty, and social exclusion. All these themes are often present in lives of children who have experienced domestic violence and are therefore relevant to the current study. Additionally, methods employed in the selected studies are relevant to this study. They included open-ended, flexible and creative approaches to engage the children and to allow them to express their thoughts and feelings about things of meaning, interest and concern to them. Such methods allowed the children to communicate on their own terms, using their own words.

4.3 Studies of Children's Perspectives on Domestic Violence

Until recently there has been comparatively little research that involves listening to children's perspectives about domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2002; McGee, 2000). A selection of four studies into children's experiences of domestic violence which reflect a qualitative, child-focused approach will now be examined.

4.3.1 Study One

Buckley et al (2007) explored children's experiences of domestic violence by gathering focus group data from 22 children (aged eight to adulthood) who had received refuge services in the Republic of Ireland. This work was part of a larger study involving 70 participants including service providers and mothers. The focus groups utilised methods such as vignettes and fictitious letters to initiate discussions. They highlighted descriptions from the children of anxiety, fear and dread, being bullied at school, the burden of responsibility in relation to parents and siblings, and regrets about lost childhoods. One of their most striking findings was what they called the *"ordinariness"* of the children's experiences, which potentially disguise the detrimental impact of domestic violence. For instance, it is developmentally appropriate for children to show distress when parents argue and for teenagers to be self-conscious about their families. This means that behaviours can be mistakenly assumed to be *"typical, exasperating, juvenile behaviours,"* and can mask the true reality and trauma (Buckley et al., 2007, p. 308). This study also highlighted how events combined with individual characteristics can impact children differently, even those within the same family.

Further, the effects of living with domestic violence can endure even after measures to ensure the children's safety have been made.

In Buckley et al's study (2007) the child participants and their mothers were recruited from populations accessing refuge services. This is something often cited as a methodological weakness in research surrounding domestic violence (Kashani and Allan, 1998). A further criticism is that the children's responses only represented part of the research focus as the views of adults were also sought, this meant that the study was not child-focused in approach and the data collection methods although creative, remained adult directed and controlled.

4.3.2 Study Two

In Scotland, Stafford et al (2007) explored the views of 30 children (age ten to 16 years old) about moving home as a result of domestic violence, and about what they perceived their support needs to be. Most of the group had made multiple moves. A combination of individual and group in-depth, interviews focusing on the concept of a journey was used. Each child drew a visual journey linking their old house to their current home. The dialogue that surrounded this drawing task provided rich information about:

- the incident that required them to leave home suddenly, often with little planning and in a state of confusion,
- living with anxiety and fear for themselves and their mothers,
- leaving behind friends, pets and possessions,
- positive things about moving,
- school and the importance of friendships,
- the value of having someone to talk to whom they trusted,
- and the support received from new friends, adults and support workers in refuges.

The data collection methods utilised by Stafford et al (2007) enabled the children to engage in a child-friendly manner where they maintained some control of the content of the discussions; through choices related to what they drew and subsequently were willing to share with the researchers. Unlike the other studies considered in this section (Buckley et al., 2007; Mullender et al., 2002; McGee, 2000) this study did not focus directly on the children's experiences of domestic

violence which possibly meant that the children talked more readily and the data collected was far richer than if the focus had been entirely on potentially traumatic experiences and memories. Despite this indirect approach, the data collected about their experiences of domestic violence and the impact on their lives was rich and detailed.

4.3.3 Study Three

Research published by Mullender et al (2002) has been described as a *"groundbreaking book on children's perspectives"* (Houghton, 2008, p. 29) about living with domestic violence. The large-scale study was made up of two parts. Part one consisted of the first ever school survey of a general population of children about their perceptions and understanding of domestic violence. Questionnaires from 1395 participants (eight to 16 years old) were completed across England and quantitatively analysed.

The second part of the research consisted of individual and group interviews with children who had lived in situations of domestic violence against their mothers. No more than half of the 54 child participants came from refuges, which represents a methodological strength for a study about domestic violence. Like Buckley et al (2007) this work was part of a larger study which also included interviews with 24 mothers and 20 professionals. Mullender et al (2002) claim that the children's voices were central to the study and there were elements of interweaving the perspectives of mothers and children. However, in this large study the approach is not reflective of a child-focused piece of research. The study was longitudinal, where possible the children were tracked for up to 18 months to explore their progress and most children were interviewed twice, as well as through one telephone call in between interviews. The reason for the longitudinal element of the study was to enable tracking of the participants; it was not seen as an opportunity to develop rapport with the participants to gather richer data.

This study encompassed a multi-cultural research team to ensure that it was both ethically sensitive and anti-racist in its approach. Findings included:

- marked differences in experiences and reactions to the same events from siblings,

- mothers and siblings being identified as the most supportive relationships, although over half of the participants admitted to not talking to them when the domestic violence was occurring,
- some children highlighted the role of the extended family and adult friends although this was dependent of their wider knowledge of the violence,
- the importance of friends and peers, who were the most likely people that children actively told about the situation at home,
- and the value of specialist domestic violence provisions such as refuges and community projects.

4.3.4 Study Four

McGee's book (2000) of her research study of 54 children (aged five to 17 years old) and 48 mothers in England and Wales explored what it means to children to experience domestic violence. This study used an opt-in procedure for recruitment of mothers and children, where an active decision to be involved was required. Findings included:

- that most children wanted to talk about the domestic violence,
- a barrier to communication was that some children did not have the appropriate vocabulary to explain what was happening,
- the stigma associated is often realised even in young children,
- grandparents were often a source of support to children,
- with the exception of mothers, friends were the main source of emotional support,
- and the crucial role of school.

The appropriateness of having a one-off interview with such young children, who were asked about whom they talked to about the domestic violence they experienced and how support for children could be improved, is questionable. In this study, as in some of the others, the fact that the children were not the sole focus of the research meant that the research methods utilised were not particularly child friendly.

In addition to the studies outlined above there have been a number of literature reviews in the past few years. Houghton (2008) aimed to explore the active participation in research of children who have experienced domestic violence and

their report was detailed and thorough. Amongst its many findings were the following points which are significant to the current study:

- children feel that adults need to listen to them more so that adults can better understand the children's reality of domestic violence,
- mums, family and friends are most important to children,
- children have little faith in, and do not trust professionals,
- and home and school are the key places for getting support.

Another literature review by Gorin (2004) looked primarily at domestic violence studies which have aimed to listen to children directly and found that children: do not know where to go to get formal help, are concerned that they will not be believed, and want help to think through problems.

The change in perception and understanding of children's experiences of domestic violence has led to a move away from viewing such children as passive victims or silent witnesses towards recognising their capacity to think, engage and respond (Worrall et al., 2008). As Mullender et al (2002) stated:

> *Listening to children who have lived with domestic violence has meant not only hearing voices that were previously silenced ... but seeing familiar problems from a new child-centred perspective (Mullender et al., 2002).*

Qualitative research has found children dynamic in their efforts to make sense of their experiences, while actively navigating their way around the complexity and terror intrinsic to the situations they are living in (see Mullender, 2006; McIntosh, 2002; Mullender et al., 2002; Mullender and Morley, 1994).

Summary

The literature tells us that children's experiences are different from adults although their experiences can be interrelated. Children not only have the right to be heard but have an essential subjective perspective to convey that can enable increased understanding of issues that are significant to their lives. In order to interpret children's experiences and understanding they need to be treated with respect and enabled to directly take part in research themselves.

Many research strategies have been used that are responsive to children's needs, interests and motivations to develop rapport, openness and trust. Creative research approaches included visual journeys (Stafford et al., 2007) and photo-elicitation interviews (Clark-Ibanez, 2007), which represent child-friendly approaches to researching children's perspectives. The current study which is entirely focused on the views and perspectives of children hopes to utilise and extend some of these strategies to ensure that the approach is truly child-friendly and that the participants are given the time, space and opportunity to express their views and perspectives about their lives post domestic violence. It is hoped that by taking such a child-focused approach that the issues that are truly relevant to the children are exposed.

Chapter 5 - Theory

As a psychologist carrying out research it is essential that the current study is underpinned by appropriate theories, principles and ideas. This chapter aims to provide a framework for understanding the context of the present study and its findings. Thus it represents an overview of some of the major psychological theories that have helped to shape the researcher's thinking, and positions the study within a psychological context of research. The psychological theories include:

- Attachment theory
- Social learning theory
- Resilience theory
- Feminist theory

This chapter introduces a brief explanation of each of these four theories followed by a discussion of how they might help to further understand the issues surrounding children's experiences of domestic violence. The theories provide a rich context for the current study and will enable exploration of findings within and between these theories.

5.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory, originally formulated by Bowlby (1988, 1980, 1979, 1973, 1969, 1953) provides a framework for research into the short and long-term effects of early relationship experiences on children (Dodd, 2009). Attachment typically relates to the emotional bond between children and their caregivers. This is a very powerful bond that keeps infants close to their main caregivers (usually mothers) which is necessary for their survival through the provision by the attachment figure of feeding, safety and comfort. Babies form attachment with primary caregivers during the first six months of life (Bowlby, 1953).

According to attachment theory, early relationships allow children to experience a sense of security, develop readiness to explore the world, and provide a solid foundation for the development of self-regulation (Dodd, 2009; Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007; Bolger et al., 1998). Thus experiences in infancy are very important in shaping children's emotional health, resilience and social competence

(Dodd, 2009). A secure attachment relationship depends on the consistency of the parenting and the child's ability to identify with the parent (Hill, 1996). The attachment behaviour of infants who are insecurely attached can be classified into three categories: anxious-avoidant, anxious-resistant, and disorganised. Estimates of secure attachment among children exposed to risk factors such as domestic violence tend to be significantly lower than found in the general population, as well as such children having a higher level of disorganised attachment (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007).

Children whose needs are met, typically develop models of themselves as competent, effective, and lovable; models of others as predictable and trustworthy; and models of relationships as rewarding and worthwhile (Bolger et al., 1998). When living in households with domestic violence, home can become a place of tension and danger (Howe, 2005) which can adversely affect the attachment relationship between parent and child (Dodd, 2009). If children do not experience a secure attachment relationship due to unresponsive or inappropriate parenting it can lead to the creation of negative models of both self and others (Bolger et al., 1998). Children can potentially develop an internal working model of the self as one unworthy of care and protection (Howe, 2005). Bowlby (1969) argued that a child's internal representation of the self is related to their self-esteem and self-concept, and that these develop alongside working models of attachment figures (Vondra et al., 1989).

Although parenting capacity has already been discussed in the literature review (see section 3.7) it is important to revisit it within the context of attachment theory. Women who experience domestic violence can present with higher levels of stress and mental health difficulties, which can lead to a reduction in emotional availability for their children (Howe, 2005). Good parenting develops through strong attachment relationships and is considered a protective factor which can help children cope with adversity, such as experiencing domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2000). Valuable lessons can be learned from parents who despite their own negative experiences and trauma, manage to maintain emotional availability for their children.

5.2 Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is based on Bandura's work (1977) and suggests that children develop beliefs and behaviour patterns from observing and interacting with those around them.

> *People are not born with preformed repertoires of aggressive behaviour. They must learn them in one way or another. Some of the elementary forms of aggression can be perfected with minimal guidance, but most aggressive activities – whether they be duelling with switch-blade knives, sparring with opponents, military combat, or vengeful ridicule – entail intricate skills that require extensive learning. In the social learning system, aggressive modes of response are acquired either through observation of aggressive models or on the basis of direct experience (Bandura, 1973, p. 212).*

The link between childhood experiences of domestic violence and violence in adulthood has been acknowledged by many (Murrell et al., 2007; Shlonsky and Friend, 2007; Renner and Slack, 2006; Kashani and Allan, 1998; Henning et al., 1997), and is a phenomenon frequently referred to as the 'intergenerational transmission of violence' or the 'cycle of violence' (Murrell et al., 2007; Peled et al., 1995; Jaffe et al., 1990). The notion of the cycle of violence suggests that children who have experienced domestic violence can learn potentially destructive strategies of problem solving, conflict resolution and communication which they then employ in their daily interactions (Murrell et al., 2007; Rivett et al., 2006). The mechanism of this transmission of violence is observational learning most commonly described as learning from modelling within a social learning perspective (Bandura, 1977, 1973). The prominent sources of this transmission of violence for children include family and community members, as well as the media. As it is within their social context that children learn that violence is either acceptable and/ or appropriate, or not (Day et al., 2009).

Highly significant is the development of self regulation which is a prerequisite to the development of social skills needed for healthy and successful relationships. Experience of violence provides a model of behaviour that lacks appropriate regulation of negative emotions (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007). Thus children from more violent homes are more likely to acquire aggressive modes of behaviour (Murrell et al., 2007). Where there is both domestic violence and child abuse there are additional opportunities for learning aggressive behaviour patterns (McDonald et al., 2009; Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007).

The social learning theory of aggression also suggests that children are more likely to incorporate the values and behaviours of the parent with whom they more closely identify, most typically the same-sex parent (McDonald et al., 2009; Bandura, 1977, 1973).

However, it must also be considered that alongside the modelling of negative and violent behaviour during domestic violence, children may benefit from experiencing the strength and courage of the non-violent parent. Such behaviour can include the *"art of survival"* as well as modelling *"assertive and non-violent responses to violence"* (Dodd, 2009, p. 25).

5.3 Resilience Theory

The study of resilience has overturned many negative assumptions and challenges deficit-focused models about children growing up with disadvantage and adversity (Masten, 2001).

The 1970s saw the initial exploration of the phenomenon of resilience with a focus on children considered at risk (genetically or environmentally) of psychopathology and developmental problems (Masten, 2001). Resilience can be thought of as *"forces that pressure development in a positive direction"* (Seifer, 2003, p. 32) and refers to the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten et al., 1990). Rutter (2006) describes resilience as an interactive concept concerned with the combination of serious risk experiences and a relatively positive psychological outcome despite those experiences.

Within the area of domestic violence, support for resilience theory comes from findings that some children who have experienced domestic violence do not display any more problems than children who have not been so exposed (Humphreys and Houghton, 2008; Lapierre, 2008; Ferguson and Horwood, 2003). Despite the abundant evidence to suggest the many ways children can be affected by their experiences of domestic violence (see sections 3.6 and 4.1), there are

plenty of children who develop successful ways of coping with the most extreme cases of adversity (for example, survivors of uxoricide, see Parker et al., 2004)[2].

Masten (2001) suggests that resilience is a common, rather than an extraordinary feature in the process of human adaptive development.

> *The great surprise of resilience research is the ordinariness of the phenomena. Resilience appears to be a common phenomenon that results in most cases from the operation of basic human adaptational systems. If those systems are protected and in good working order, development is robust even in the face of severe adversity; if these major systems are impaired, antecedent or consequent to adversity, then the risk for developmental problems is much greater, particularly if the environmental hazards are prolonged (Masten, 2001, p. 227).*

As already mentioned the impact of domestic violence is not uniform and children's responses vary greatly. The developmental psychopathology perspective views the relationship between antecedent risk experiences as moderated by an array of individual and environmental factors (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007). This offers an explanation for how even children in the same family are affected in different ways regarding their experiences of domestic violence. Research into resilience tends to focus on two main notions; risk or vulnerability factors (associated with an increased likelihood of negative outcomes) and protective factors (which buffer the effects of adversity). Both are shaped by individual influences like, temperament, age, gender and stage of development. As well as family or interpersonal factors such as socio-economic status, quality of attachment with caregivers, lifestyle and family functioning, and cultural, ethnic or community factors (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007; Seifer, 2003; Schaffer, 1998). Domestic violence is considered a risk factor for children and since it occurs in the home, factors such as parenting and social support will influence how experiences of domestic violence affect children (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007).

There are many factors which affect the risks to children who have experienced domestic violence (Humphreys and Houghton, 2008). Children will be affected by the severity, nature and extent of the violence (see Johnson, 2006a), whether they were directly abused (Edleson, 1999) as well as by the extent to which their needs

---

[2] Uxoricide is the term for the murder of a wife by a husband. Although there is a term (meriticide) meaning the murder of a husband by a wife, it is rarely used, and uxoricide is generally the term used for any spousal killing (Parker et al., 2004).

have been neglected (Brandon and Lewis, 1996). It is known that disabled children are at greater risk of all forms of violence than non-disabled children, and the presence of multiple impairments appears to increase the risk of violence (The Children's Rights Alliance for England and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2008). Other factors include:

- *Age.* Young children have not developed many of the skills and functions required to develop potential protective processes, due to their limited life experiences and social opportunities. This includes their comparative lack of communication skills and language to express concerns and make sense of situations, consequently they are often unable to cope as well as older children (Seifer, 2003) .
- *Gender.* Being female reduces the risk of externalising and being male reduces the risk of developing internalising responses (Ferguson and Horwood, 2003).
- *Personality or temperamental factors.* An example is that high self-esteem acts as a protective factor (Ferguson and Horwood, 2003).
- *Attachment and affiliation relationships.* A strong, positive relationship with a competent adult is considered a protective factor for children (Holt et al., 2008; Ferguson and Horwood, 2003; Masten et al., 1990).

5.4 Feminist Theory

Feminism developed in the early 1970s giving:

> *collective meaning to individual experiences through applying the concepts of domination, oppression, exploitation, and ideology to women's experiences (Hanmer, 1990, p. 443).*

It was feminism that first brought domestic violence into the public sphere and highlighted the plight of women and children living in abusive situations. Exploring domestic violence within a feminist theoretical framework places issues of violence, power and control at the centre. Feminists claim that men use violence to control their women because they feel entitled to, and are supported by a patriarchal culture (Johnson and Ferraro, 2000). Although equality between men and women in our society is more visible than in the 1970s, feminists claim that social and institutional power structures continue to support unequal power relations between men and women, and it is this which explains the highly

gendered pattern of domestic violence (Respect, 2004). Most studies of domestic violence have been undertaken within heterosexual relationships and have found that the majority involve men who perpetrate violence against women (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Walby and Allen, 2004; Mirrlees-Black, 1999). Some claim that feminist theories focusing on male domination and control offer the most convincing explanation for the extent and pervasiveness of domestic violence as *"domestic violence is a phenomenon that is embedded in society and in social institutions"* (Abrahams, 2004, p. 36).

Although this study acknowledges the highly gendered patterns of domestic violence, and recognises the historical, social and institutional patriarchal views that have shaped our society, it is not written from a feminist position: it purports to be inclusive in remit to allow a broader understanding of the subjectivity of each person's experience.

Support for feminist theories of domestic violence is offered through the understanding of the relationship between intimate terrorism and traditional gender attitudes (see section 2.5), where control is the motivating variable for the typically male perpetrator (Johnson, 2006a, 2006b). Exploration of control tactics by Johnson (2006b) included measures similar to the pro-feminist Duluth model (Pence and Paymar, 1993) used internationally to guide work with violent men whilst empowering women (Hester et al., 2007). Through challenging the assumptions about why women stay with abusive and violent men, the 'power and control wheel' (Figure 1) was designed to depict the primary abusive behaviours experienced by women living with domestic violence. At the centre of the wheel is the intention to establish power and control, the spokes each represent a particular abusive tactic, while the rim depicts the threat of violence (Pence and Paymar, 1993). Each of the tactics depicted on the power and control wheel are typical of behaviours used by groups of people to dominate others. Feminist theory claims that men in particular are taught these tactics through experiences of a patriarchal culture that guides them to dominate (Pence and Paymar, 1993). It is this principle of control that is crucial to understand the motivational explanation for domestic violence. The distinction between the four different types of violence defined by Johnson (Johnson, 2006b, 2006a) enables feminist theory to be positioned within a wider, less gender-rigid understanding of violence. These distinctions between types of violence can also offer some explanation for the

contradictory research findings which simultaneously convey a sense of the mutuality of violence across genders and within same sex relationships, whilst acknowledging the overwhelming prevalence of male perpetrated violence.

Fig. 1 The Duluth Model: The Power and Control Wheel, source Domestic Abuse Intervention Programmes (2008).

The feminist movements in the UK, including Women's Aid have long advocated not only for women, but also for children (Hague et al., 2000). They have provided research, intervention and support services that have moved with society. It is through Women's Aid that most of the participants in this study were accessed.

Summary of the Psychological Theories

Domestic violence can disrupt the emotional bond between a parent and a child which can impact upon the effectiveness of parenting. Attachment theory provides

an understanding of the importance of children's early experiences and the need to develop a secure relationship with a main caregiver. It highlights the effective and powerful protective function of such a bond as children are made to feel loved, valued and special and are more likely to think about themselves positively in the future. Due to the methodology employed no historical details about the children's early experiences, including their relationships with caregivers, the onset of the violence, and other contextual information that may have offered insight into the nature of the children's attachment relationships were collected. However in light of the research aims it is likely that the children's attachment figures and relationships with family members, especially their mothers with whom they live may be prominent.

The concept that children learn through observation from within their home environment is concerning for children who live in households with domestic violence, especially when we consider the high prevalence of this issue. Reassuringly the modelling of positive attitudes, behaviours and beliefs by non-violent parents and others including peers, family and community members, can ensure appropriate coping strategies develop. Although valuable as a framework for consideration of the findings in the current study, social learning theory does not seem to provide a thorough explanation of why some people will decide to live in a non-violent manner as an adult despite experiences of domestic violence as a child or how some children do not exhibit violent or aggressive behaviour despite experiencing serious domestic violence. Thus, it cannot be assumed that all children who experience domestic violence will show negative effects (Dodd, 2009) and we should be careful not to over-pathologise (Humphreys and Houghton, 2008).

Resilience theory focuses on the possibility of positive outcomes despite negative experiences and allows individual experiences, characteristics and influences to play a role. Attachment to a competent and emotionally available adult represents a major protective factor. Resilience theory responds more adequately to the variability in responses by introducing the concepts of protective and compensatory factors alongside those that are a risk. Resilience theory and research into risk and protective factors offers a framework to answer questions about the potential negative effects of domestic violence on children and to guide efforts to understand the protective process (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007). This

study is attempting to uncover some of the protective factors present in the lives of the participants - the things that have helped them to cope with their experiences of domestic violence.

As has previously been alluded to there are often multiple adversities present in households with domestic violence (see section 3.7). Resilience theory does not aide the understanding about how to differentiate between the different risk and protective factors, so what may seem to be the result of a single risk factor (for instance, domestic violence) may in fact be due to other unmeasured adversities (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2007). Caution is required around the use of the term 'resiliency' which can seem to suggest a personality trait. This use of the term in a manner suggesting a fixed, personal attribute would create ethical implications for the child who is so labelled, as it would imply that such a child who is not resilient may not *"have what it takes"* to overcome adversity (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 5). Or alternatively a child who is considered resilient may have their needs overlooked.

Feminism represents an historical, cultural and powerful springboard for exploring domestic violence and provides a strong framework where the concepts of masculine power and control are held central. Feminism is important to this study as it was the first theory to tackle domestic violence and should be credited for the high status given to domestic violence within legislation and policy today. Its relevance needs to be carefully considered in the context of inclusion, equality and fairness: after all men do experience domestic violence at the hands of women, even if to a much lesser degree.

For research, policy and intervention surrounding domestic violence to continue to evolve as they have done over the last decades largely lead by feminist theory, research and political drive, there needs to be consideration of the vulnerabilities of boys and men - of whom some resort to violence. Issues of gender, power and violence have often been inadequately dealt with especially when it comes to the role of fathers who are most often perpetrators of violence. There has been no UK research that specifically looks at the views of fathers themselves and the meanings they attribute to their violence (Featherstone and Peckover, 2007).

Chapter 6 - Methodology

The purpose of this study, which is reflected in the choice of methodology, is to examine whether experiences of domestic violence have impacted on the day to day lives of children. In particular it aims to answer the following research questions:

- What is important, interesting and special to children who have experienced domestic violence?
- What is significant to the children?
- How do their experiences of being in a household where there was domestic violence affect their perceptions of everyday experiences including their understanding of relationships and response to events?

Traditionally there are two dominant research paradigms; quantitative and qualitative, each being linked to different epistemological and ontological orientations. The quantitative paradigm is linked to the natural science epistemology, positivism, which believes that the world can be represented by sets of rules and testable theories (Bryman, 2004). Historically, psychological research functioned within this paradigm. However, over the past decade a transformation has resulted in qualitative psychological research being widely undertaken (Coyle, 2007).

In order to address the aims of this research study it needed to acquire an in-depth understanding of the children's experiences and perceptions. These are both conceptual and fluid therefore a qualitative methodology was appropriate. The qualitative paradigm is linked to the interpretivism epistemological position where reality is seen as being constructed by complex, interactive sets of meaning (Mendlinger and Cwikel, 2008; Bryman, 2004) and knowledge is created and negotiated between people (Oliver, 2008). The socially constructed nature of reality is stressed and the researcher seeks to answer questions about how social experience is created and given meaning by examining the interpretations of the world by its participants (Bryman, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

Qualitative research encompasses a variety of methods and a range of epistemologies (Coyle, 2007). The epistemological stance of a study influences

the status of the data collected, the role of the researcher and the conclusions that can be drawn from the data (Lyons, 2007). Abrahams (2004) refers to it as a political decision. This study was underpinned by one of the main strands of psychological enquiry, social constructivism (Lyons, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), which assumes that individuals seek understanding of their world. It is through their interactions with others that they develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2003). The main methodological principle is interpretative analysis, where researchers attempt to interpret the meanings their participants have about the world (Creswell, 2003). Within the interpretative-constructivist paradigm, Mertens claims that:

> *the interaction between the researcher and the participants is felt to be essential as they struggle together to make their values explicit and create the knowledge that will be the results of the study (Mertens, 2003, p. 141).*

There are many different qualitative strategies of enquiry, for example, ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, narrative research and phenomenological research (Creswell, 2003). Of particular interest to this study is phenomenological research which attempts to identify *"the essence of human experiences"* (Creswell, 2003, p. 15) and as such is concerned with the phenomenon as described by the participants. Phenomenological research typically involves small numbers of participants and is carried out through extensive engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994).

6.1 The Role of the Researcher

Historically, qualitative psychological research has been criticised for being subjective, anecdotal and lacking scientific rigour (Coyle, 2007). One major criticism is researcher bias as a result of their values, perspective and experiences (Patton, 1990) which is significant as qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative. Thus, qualitative studies are often typified by acknowledgement of the social process of research and the acceptance that all inquiry is laden with values (Coyle, 2007; Mertens, 2003).

Qualitative research highlights the *"intimate relationship"* between the researcher and what is studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 8). Therefore, the level of

personal interpretation is likely to be high. Consequently, the personal biography and perspective of the researcher is significant, as it is they who filter *"the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific socio-political and historical moment"* (Creswell, 2003, p. 182).

A qualitative researcher is required to systematically reflect on their role in the study, to be open and honest about how their personal biography may shape and influence the research. It is through this introspection and reflexivity that the personal and researcher self become inseparable (Creswell, 2003). In order to increase the transparency of the research process and to help the audience better understand and evaluate the study, the *"speaking position"* of the researcher needs to be highlighted (Coyle, 2007, p. 18). The researcher's speaking position for this study is outlined in Appendix A.

6.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

In line with its phenomenological roots, this study aimed to obtain personal accounts of life as a child, from the perspective of children who have experienced domestic violence. The data analysis method of IPA was deemed appropriate as it has an explicit phenomenological commitment and an idiographic emphasis (Coyle, 2007), meaning that it focuses on the distinctive and unique characteristics of the participants and how they make sense of their experiences.

IPA stems from the theoretical position of phenomenological epistemology which is concerned with how individuals make sense of the world around them (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2004; Willig, 2001). This fits well with the aims of this study. IPA accepts the impossibility of having direct access to someone else's experience (Willig, 2001), emphasises the dynamic process of research and acknowledges the active role of the researcher (Smith and Osborn, 2003). The researcher brings a subjective and reflective process of interpretation of the participant's experience explicitly into the research process (Reid et al., 2005; Willig, 2001).

The phenomenological basis of IPA assumes that language reflects the experiences and meanings the participants attach to events and social situations (Lyons, 2007). This is by no means straight forward as to access the participants'

experiences and meaning requires the researcher to interpret the data: their language. Therefore the extent to which the researcher can enter the inner world of the participants and interpret the data in a way which elicits their real experiences must be carefully considered (Lyons, 2007). The approach is complicated and does not claim that it is easy for people, especially children to express what they are thinking and feeling, and accordingly the researcher to interpret this.

> *IPA assumes that the researcher can access motives and understandings that the participant is either not aware of or finds difficult to express (Lyons, 2007, p. 162).*

As previously discussed, the role of the qualitative researcher is a significant one. In the case of IPA this role is paramount as it involves a two-stage interpretation process (a double hermeneutic). The participants are trying to make sense of their worlds, while the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Firstly, the researcher aims to put themselves in place of participants and then they strive to ask critical questions of the participants words whilst:

> *being aware that there is no straightforward and/or direct relationship between what people express and what they may experience (Lyons, 2007, p. 162).*

The practicalities of undertaking IPA will be discussed in detail at a later stage (see section 6.8).

6.3 Research Design

Prior to the final decision on the methods of data collection a number of qualitative methods were considered and deemed unsuitable for practical, ethical and/or methodological reasons. Those rejected included focus groups and individual interviews.

During focus group, facilitated group discussion makes use of group interactions and peer support to explore individual experiences. Despite a recent study by Buckley et al (2007) which utilised focus groups with children who had experienced domestic violence, this method was deemed unsuitable for this study because of the potential difficulties tracking and exploring individual perceptions,

and issues surrounding exposure to possible emotional distress. Also the logistical issues surrounding the organisation of a focus group of vulnerable children would be complex, both for the researcher who had no access to funds or suitable meeting space, and for the families, many of whom had no access to transport and limited finances due to them fleeing to live in refuges.

One-off individual interviews were also considered, but disregarded as it was felt that the potential power imbalance between the researcher and child may be too great. In addition the children may have already experienced lots of questioning about the details of the domestic violence experienced, and may find a one-to-one interface with an unfamiliar adult intimidating or uncomfortable.

It was strongly felt that a positive relationship built on rapport and trust was essential for the children to relax and share their views. It was also important for the children to have some control over the research process, and the principle of avoiding harm was paramount to the process of shaping the research. It was vital that the research methods employed did not involve direct questioning about their experiences of domestic violence that may cause them pain (Laws, 2004) as they may not want to dredge back over the past to deal with potentially traumatic memories.

Willig (2001) eludes to the research process as being a creative enterprise which should aim to find the best way of answering the questions asked. This is a view that is supported by Laws who claims that for research with children the *"main thing you need is not a specific technique, but a child-friendly approach"* (Laws, 2004, p. 49). Birbeck and Drummond (2007) suggest that children are able to demonstrate their true abilities when child-centred techniques are adopted by the researcher that take into account their cognitive, communicative and social needs. Considering all these factors, the research design was created which included the use of a combination of three data collection methods. These were: participant-generated photographs, semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews and participant observation. All were identified as being suitable both methodologically and ethically.

6.4 Ethical Issues

As a TEP working with children the research was conducted to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act (UK Parliament, 1998) and the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2006). The BPS Code is regularly updated to keep pace with social change, research findings and societal views about the rights of individuals (Webster and Bond, 2002). This *"conscience"* of the profession (Webster and Bond, 2002, p. 17) is based upon four ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. These reflect the fundamental parameters that guide ethical reasoning, decision making and the behaviour of psychologists (British Psychological Society, 2006). In addition to this the researcher submitted an 'application for ethical approval' to the University of Bristol Human Participants Ethics Committee. It was only when their rigorous standards for the collection, analysis and storage of data were achieved that this research study could get underway.

Research involving direct contact with children requires consideration of methodological and ethical issues different to research with adults. The manner in which these differences are dealt with needs careful contemplation by the researcher (see Maxwell, 2007; National Children's Bureau, 2001; Thomas and O'Kane, 1998). Due to the population involved, ethical considerations played a major role in shaping the research design. The key areas of informed consent, confidentiality and power are now discussed in further detail.

6.4.1 Informed Consent

The principle of gaining informed consent from the participants in this study was essential and steps were taken to ensure that children and their mothers were given *"ample opportunity to understand the nature, purpose, and anticipated consequences"* of their participation (British Psychological Society, 2006, p. 12). The principles outlined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Unicef, 2008) state a child's right to express their views freely in all matters that affect them as well as their right to information; both of which relate to the issue of consent. The University of Bristol's ethical process ensured that this was clearly and appropriately addressed through examination of the information sheets and consent forms created for children and parents.

It is generally accepted that a child should give positive consent rather than registering dissent (Hill, 2005). However, it is suggested that the concept of informed consent can be confusing for children, so in this study agreement was sought in the company of each child's mother (Fox and Rendall, 2002). Careful consideration was given to the language used both in the information sheets and during the initial meeting, where consent was initially discussed. The process of consent should be considered an ongoing feature of research as the implications of participation may only become truly apparent once the child is involved in the study and consequently they should be able to change their mind and end their involvement at any stage (Maxwell, 2007; Laws, 2004). The researcher made this explicit to the children and reinforced it by explaining how they could withdraw by proxy. This was to ensure that the child felt no pressure to continue with the study if they wanted to withdraw at anytime. Explicit consent was sought during each session to check about audio recording the discussions.

6.4.2 Confidentiality

It is essential that the identities of the participants were protected (Laws, 2004). This was particularly pertinent for the children involved in the study who had fled violent households and were living in refuges in order to be protected from the perpetrators. Consequently, in all case notes, observation notes and transcripts, codes were used in place of any names of people or places from the outset to protect the anonymity of the participants and limit any clues about their identity (UK Parliament, 1998). In qualitative research, especially with a small sample of participants, it is necessary to consider that the children's stories may be enough to identify them (Laws, 2004) so it is for this reason that the participants and their siblings in this study have been gender neutralised (see Chapter 7).

The new doctoral training route and the changing role of educational psychologists mean that research is becoming a more prevalent activity for practising psychologists. A blurred boundary between the two separate roles of researcher and psychologist has been identified (Fox and Rendall, 2002) which can provide interesting internal debates for the researcher, to ensure that the roles of researcher and practitioner remain separate. It was important to remain mindful of this with regards to protecting the confidentiality of the participants when engaged in work related to practice with other practitioners who may also know the

participants (for example, those from Women's Aid, social services and school staff).

During the initial meeting with each child and their mother it was made clear that there were limitations to maintaining confidentiality (British Psychological Society, 2006) in terms of sharing information if the child or someone else was considered to be at risk of harm. Each participant was asked to provide the name of someone with whom the researcher could share this type of information if necessary. In all cases the participants identified their mothers.

6.4.3 Power

The power differential between adults and children presents *"the biggest ethical challenge for researchers working with children"* (Morrow and Richards, 1996, p. 98) and represents a key factor to all ethical considerations when involving children in research (Laws, 2004). The power needs to be shared by researcher and participant if research is to be considered ethical (Fox and Rendall, 2002). In this study this was achieved through the choice of methodology which enabled a more collaborative approach to research, the child retained control as the discussions focused on their photos. The children had knowingly chosen what images to capture and then share with the researcher.

"Power is an inevitable part of the research process" (Brownlie et al., 2006, p. 26) so as a researcher, awareness of issues surrounding adult-child interaction required careful consideration with respect to ability and power. This power issue was a pertinent consideration for these children as they may have directly experienced a dominant and controlling adult personality in the past during incidences of domestic violence. So for some children it may have been difficult and unnatural for them to disagree with the adult researcher as they may have feared their response would be unacceptable (Hill, 2005).

The interaction between a child participant and an adult researcher can be a delicate process where the researcher can take on roles such as a disciplinarian or a carer (Mauthner, 1997). The researcher tried hard to prevent adopting either role, and used strategies such as ignoring inappropriate behaviour and/or language, distracting the child or changing the subject in order to avoid situations

where discipline may be required. The researcher was known to the children by her abbreviated first name and attempted to engage from the very beginning in an informal manner, through the choice of language, humour and by showing interest in things they enjoyed, such as wrestling, Bratz and Dr Who. These strategies aimed to make the participants feel at ease and ensure that they had some control over the process.

> *It is more appropriate to enter the research environment as a participating adult able to adopt the role of a sensitive, empathetic and caring adult. A relationship based on trust and mutual respect can be developed allowing the researcher to uphold the ethical imperatives when working with children. This approach is also entirely consistent with the social, intellectual and communication requirements of children if they are to participate in research. (Birbeck and Drummond, 2007, p. 27)*

With regards to the protection of research participants, the researcher had to consider the research in terms of potential risk to the children. The area of domestic violence is a very sensitive issue and as such the researcher was vigilant in the manner which the study was conducted. It was not the intention of the researcher to address the issue of domestic violence with the children, but rather focus on how they understand and perceive their current situation. However, there was always the possibility that the children may want to discuss their experiences and may get upset or distressed during the study, so it was important to behave in a sensitive manner.

As already acknowledged gender is highly relevant to experiences of violence (Laws, 2004). One suggestion to address the power imbalance related to gender is to use female researchers to interview female participants and male researchers, male participants. This was not possible given the limited resources and size of this study. Additionally, considering that all the perpetrators of the domestic violence in the participants' lives were men, perhaps the boys would not have been more open with male researchers.

6.5 Participants

The participants in this study were purposively sampled as the aim of qualitative research is to identify and select participants that will best help the researcher to understand the phenomena being explored (Creswell, 2003). In this case the

participants were children who had experienced domestic violence, but who were no longer living in unsafe or unstable situations.

Categorisation of the children as having 'experienced domestic violence' was made by their parents or carers (in this study these were all mothers). Of those involved in the study, most of the mothers had accessed services provided by Women's Aid with whom information about the study had been shared. One participant was recruited through a Family Group Conference Coordinator who was involved in the local Domestic Violence Forum. Table 1 shows basic information about the participants, further contextual information is provided in Appendix B. Throughout this thesis the participants have been gender neutralised to prevent any possibility of identification. Two of the participants were female and three male.

Age at start of study	Ethnic Group	Living Circumstances
7	White British	At home
8	Asian British	In refuge
9	White British	In refuge
10	White British	At home
13	White British	At home

Table 1: Participant Information.

6.6 Access

Following an initial meeting with the Area Manager of Women's Aid in the area, the researcher contacted various Women's Aid employees and other agencies via the local Domestic Violence Forum who had contact with families who were known to have experienced domestic violence. Meetings, telephone conversations and emails were conducted with the various agencies to share the aims and objectives of the study and to provide information about the study and the participants required. Information sheets for both parents and children, which explained the study in detail, were distributed to be displayed in appropriate settings or given to potential participants. An opt-in procedure was used where an active decision to take part was made by the participant (in this study this could be either the parent or the child). If interest was expressed in taking part in the study, either the link

worker obtained permission to pass the contact details onto the researcher, or the participant (or their parent) could contact the researcher directly.

The participant criteria were fairly broad and inclusive, focusing on children between seven and 13 years old. Grover (2004) states that participation in research should not be guided simply by age but rather with consideration of the individual contribution and unique perspective that children can offer. However, it was felt that children within this age range tend to be aware of their social worlds and their position in it, and have adequate language and communication skills to participate in the study.

A mix of boys and girls from a range of cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds was desirable for the study. The inclusion criteria related to the capacity of the child to understand and express themselves through English, as no funds for interpreters or additional researchers were available. The inclusion criteria were also that the children were safe and emotionally able to participate; with this in mind the domestic violence had to have been experienced, rather than ongoing.

Recruitment of participants was challenging. Although initial interest and support from the Area Manager of Women's Aid was agreed, it seemed to take time to filter down to those workers in direct contact with families. Therefore the recruitment process was time consuming and required repeated contacting and visiting agencies and much patience. As a result only five participants were recruited from the initial target of six. The time span actually allocated for data collection dramatically increased throughout the project as all the children were school-aged and the meetings had to happen after school or during school holidays. Additional challenges related to the researcher working as a TEP which meant that her time was tightly scheduled; as a result most visits occurred during evenings and school holidays. Flexibility was required to make visits convenient for families and to fit around their other commitments.

Following telephone contact, an initial visit was arranged to meet with the child and their parent or carer - for all the participants in this study this was their mother. During this visit the research purposes and aims were explained to each child and their mothers, and a 'getting to know you' game was played which allowed the

researcher to explore the child's general interests, likes and dislikes. If the child was still interested in participating the researcher explained in detail the research purpose, process and consent forms to get formal written consent from both mother and child.

The five participants in this study consisted of two girls and three boys aged between seven and 13 years old, two of the participants were siblings. Further contextual information about the participants is included in Appendix B.

6.7 Data Collection

The location of all meetings was flexible and depended on the nature of the circumstances surrounding the child and where they felt comfortable. There were no issues around the negotiation of privacy for the meetings as experienced by Mauthner (1997), with all the mothers allowing the meetings to happen in private. For three of the participants the meetings occurred in a private room in their home, and for the other two the meetings occurred in the refuge where they were living. In both these instances a play-room was used as it could be made private, and was familiar and child friendly. These factors were important as it has been recognised that children participate in meaningful ways if the research environment is one where they feel safe, secure and valued and which respects the social structure in which they live (Birbeck and Drummond, 2007).

The researcher met with each participant a total of six times over a period varying between two to four months (Table 2). Apart from the initial session where the mother was present to ensure informed consent was gained, the sessions involved the participant and the researcher. As two of the participants were siblings, three of their sessions occurred jointly: these were the introduction and final sessions as well as the participant observation.

Although the nature of the research was to be child led and flexible, a rough framework for the six sessions was utilised by the researcher and is outlined below.

- During the first session the participant was given a disposable camera and instructions on how to use it. They were invited to take photographs of anything that was *"important, interesting or special".* The focus of this

session was to begin to develop rapport so a simple 'getting to know you' game was played with the child, the researcher and their mothers.

- During the second session the purpose was to collect the camera so that the photographs could be developed and to discuss the process of taking the photographs. Questions during this session usually included the following;
  - *How did you get on taking the photos?*
  - *Which was the easiest/ most difficult/ most fun/ best/ strangest photo you took?*
  - *Were there any photos you wanted to take but weren't able to? Why?*
- Two sessions involved discussing the photographs and exploring issues that arose from these conversations, as well as discussing the photos in relation to their importance and significance in preparation of creating a photo-book for the child to keep. During these sessions the questions and prompts for discussion were focused on being open-ended to allow the participants to elaborate, or not, as they desired. The participants were usually asked the following;
  - *Tell me about this photograph.*
  - *Why did you choose to take this photo?*
  - *In your book which photo do you want first/ next/ at the end/ on the cover?*
  - *What should we write to go next to this photo in your book?*
- During session four or five the researcher and participant went to the place chosen by the child. This involved participant observation. This session was usually of great interest and value as the researcher could observe the participants in a different environment. The researcher focused upon the child's interactions with others, this usually included how they interacted with their mother and other significant people when leaving and returning from the visit, as well as those encountered in the chosen location. The researcher was also interested in the content, nature and style of the children's conversations when out of their home environment.
- During the final session, the book containing the photographs alongside captions and comments from the sessions was given to each child. This was important to provide a clear end point to their involvement and to say goodbye.

During all sessions games and activities were used to help the children feel comfortable. The researcher made a genuine effort to engage with the participant's interests and join in activities they enjoyed. These included playing board games, cards, drawing, talking about interests and exploring their day-to-day lives. For all the participants it was clear that engaging in these non-threatening, fun activities enabled a more relaxed atmosphere and eliminated the sense that they were being interviewed. It was through these activities that the positive relationship and rapport between researcher and participant developed. Time to get to know each participant was important, in order to gain a real insight into the child's perspectives and views about their worlds. The interpersonal style adopted by the researcher, the choice of the setting and the use of games aimed to reduce inhibitions and the child's desire to please (Hill, 2005).

	Period of data collection	No. of meetings	No. of participant observation	No. audio recorded	Time range of sessions
Harry	2 ½ months	6	1	4	17-56 mins.
William	4 months	6	1	4	38–60 mins.
Ben	2 months	6	1	4	34-50 mins.
David	2 ½ months	6	1	4	9-56 mins.
Liam	2 ½ months	6	1	4	43-58 mins.

Table 2: Information about Data Collection Sessions.

For the participant observation (session 4 or 5) the child was prepared in advance to make a choice to invite the researcher to join them in an activity or visiting a place that they liked to go. All the children chose to include this element. The two participants, who were siblings, chose to go to their local park which they were familiar with as they had lived in the area for most of their lives. One participant asked to go to McDonalds for a meal; another requested to go to a park and McDonalds, while the other child requested visiting a local canal for a walk and an ice-cream. The two participants residing in a refuge found their choice of activity was restricted due to them not knowing the area or what facilities were available. Detailed notes were made after the participant observation session and were included in the data analysis in the same way as the transcripts of the audio-recordings (see section 6.8).

Examining an issue from a variety of perspectives (triangulation) is a way of enhancing the methodology, and thus the validity of research (Hale et al., 2008). According to Laws (2004) the use of more than one technique can deepen the data collected by creating an element of triangulation. In this study the use of participant generated photographs, photo-elicitation interviews and participant observation will allow different perspectives on the phenomena. Additionally, it is claimed that visual methods work well when combined with other methodologies as they allow triangulation between theoretical and conceptual arguments alongside the *"subjectively interpreted lived experience of the participants"* (Stanczak, 2007, p. 12). Pink (2001) suggests that the use of photos in research cannot and should not, fit into existing methodologies but that new reflexive ways should be developed. It is with this in mind that each of the data collection methods will now be explored.

6.7.1 Participant Generated Photographs

The development of the use of visual methods represents the *"most striking development in qualitative research in recent years"* (Bryman, 2004, p. 312). Photography takes the researcher into the participant's world and is referred to as *"the mirror with a memory"* (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 38). The use of photography in research is considered an unobtrusive method of collecting data which is less likely to be disruptive and affect responses and provides an opportunity for participants to directly *"share their reality"* (Creswell, 2003, p. 187).

It is suggested that participant generated images break down the traditional power imbalance between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied (Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Frohmann, 2005). In this study, each participant was provided with a disposable camera and invited to take photographs of things that they felt were *"interesting, important or special"*. The novelty factor associated with using cameras and having the opportunity to take, share and keep photographs seemed to add to the enthusiasm to be involved in the study from the outset. All the participants were keen to take photos immediately.

6.7.2 Photo-elicitation Interviews

The main use of participant-generated photographs in this study was to provide prompts for discussion (Bryman, 2004) as it was felt that simply approaching the interviews in a semi-structured manner would not be sufficient to motivate the children to talk about their lives in detail. The use of photographs in this way is referred to as 'photo-elicitation interviews' where discussions are stimulated and guided by the images (Harper, 1998). The interpretative methodological principle of this study meant that using photographs as a research tool assumed that the meaning of the images resides most significantly in the way that the participants interpret them (Stanczak, 2007). Through discussions the researcher was able to explore and interpret the photographs and gain a greater understanding of the child's perspective. The researcher's function was to listen and encourage conversation (Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Harper, 1998) to try to understand the child's views and perspectives through the discussion of the images presented, which can *"create a bridge between their different experiences of reality"* (Pink, 2001, p. 69). Simple open-ended questions and prompts such as *"tell me about this photograph"* were used so that the photographs remained open to the child's own understanding, interpretation and explanation (Maxwell, 2007; Stanczak, 2007).

> *Photo elicitation, used with other qualitative methodologies such as interviews or participant observations, can illuminate dynamics and insight not otherwise found through other methodological approaches (Clark-Ibanez, 2007, p. 194).*

Interviews are conversations within which the researcher applies skills related to asking questions and listening (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Although there was an outline for each of the six sessions (see section 6.7), the interviews were approached in a flexible, responsive and open-ended manner to enable the children to communicate their subjective experiences (Mauthner, 1997) rather than imposing views upon them (Fontana and Frey, 1998). The main purpose of the interviews was to explore the perspectives and views of the children with regards to their meaning, interests and understanding of their current situation, and the world around them. It was very important that any questions were open-ended and non-directed to provide the child with the opportunity to share their personal experiences (Willig, 2001). As highlighted by Mauthner *"when space is made for them, children's voices express themselves clearly"* (Mauthner, 1997, p. 21).

The use of participant-generated photographs as well as a variety of fun activities assisted in breaking down imbalances of power, by giving children control and choice over the agenda and by creating an atmosphere in which they were free to talk openly. Clark-Ibanez (2007) highlights how conventional interviews are problematic for children due to: their level of linguistic communication, their cognitive development, the questions and answer setting, and the accentuated power dynamics of an adult interviewing a child. She claimed that using photo-elicitation overcomes all of these issues.

Towards the end of the interviews a photo-book of the photographs was created for the child to keep. The co-creation of personalised photo-books which contained their images had a number of purposes which included: creating a sense of a purposeful activity with a clear beginning and an end, enabling the child to have control over the interview content as the photographs were the focus and catalyst for conversations, allowing the interviews to be responsive to each child's individual needs and interests, giving the child the opportunity, time and space to talk to an interested other, and allowing for genuine rapport to develop over time with the researcher.

As a professional working with children (see Appendix A), the researcher was well aware of the importance of non-verbal communication, for example, not showing shock when certain views or beliefs were expressed. It was important to be able to share humour, identify the signs of the child being bored or uncomfortable, and when necessary to quickly change the subject, the pace of the discussion or divert attention. There is a balance between asking too few and too many questions (Mauthner, 1997) and one limitation of interviewing children, is that they are not equally articulate and perceptive (Creswell, 2003) so the approach needs to be flexible to adapt to individual differences.

Open-ended questions and prompts were used as appropriate to encourage elaboration on a subject or issue raised by the child (Willig, 2001): this was done with sensitivity and only as a response of the development of a rapport between researcher and child and where necessary for research purposes. A good rapport *"opens doors to more informed research"* (Fontana and Frey, 1998, p. 60) which was supported as generally it became easier to encourage elaboration in the later sessions when the children were more relaxed. Occasionally, at the start of

sessions generic questions were used to initiate conversation, such as *"have you had a nice weekend?"* Like the Stafford et al (2007) study, creative methods were utilised to make the interviews a pleasant experience with purpose.

6.7.3 Participant Observation

Observation allows the researcher to actively witness the phenomena being explored (Adler and Adler, 1998). In this study, the aim was that the researcher co-experienced a place that the child identified as being important, special or interesting to them. Although participant observation was not the major research method utilised it allowed the researcher to witness social processes and interactions involving the child to provide further insight into their social world. Participant observation complimented the research aims to see the world from the participants' point of view and provided a source of triangulation where an alternative setting was experienced.

> *Qualitative observations are naturalistic and allow the researcher to enter the phenomenological complexity of the world of the participants, where connections, correlations and causes can be witnessed and how they unfold (Adler and Adler, 1998, p. 81).*

This element of the research was deemed important due to the age range of the participants in acknowledgement of their developing vocabulary and evolving ability to express themselves. The researcher found that the conversations during the outings and when travelling to and from the location, were more relaxed and at times more insightful than during the tape-recorded sessions. The children were often more spontaneous in their conversations and would initiate discussion: on occasions talking openly about previously absent topics. The drawback of using participant observation was that the researcher had to remember and record the details of what had happened afterwards, often loosing some of the meaning and richness of detail.

The decision to use a longitudinal approach encompassing photo-elicitation interviews and participant observation attempted to respond to the challenge set by Maxwell who stated that appropriate methodologies need to be developed:

> *which encourage and enable children to speak for themselves in their own ways and to have their views interpreted meaningfully (Maxwell, 2007).*

6.8 Data analysis

Each audio-recorded session was fully transcribed alongside case notes and observation notes, and subjected to analysis using IPA. The researcher utilised the qualitative software package NVivo 8 for data analysis to generate themes regarding the value and meaning the children place on different aspects of their lives. IPA requires the researcher to engage in a sustained interpretative relationship with each text to obtain the meaning, which is not transparently available (Smith and Osborn, 2003). The process of using IPA used in this study is summarised below.

All interviews, case notes and observation notes were included for analysis from each participant. Initial *"wide-ranging and unfocused notes"* (Willig, 2001, p. 54) were made through the process of reading and rereading the documents and commenting on anything significant or interesting. These included things such as the tone or manner in which something was said, any non-verbal communication, repeated phrases or significant language. Utilising a data software package (NVivo 8) initial coding was undertaken to identify emergent themes and phrases through revisiting the transcripts and observation notes in an attempt to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text (Smith and Osborn, 2003). As the interviews were the most substantial element of the study the majority of codes emerged from the transcripts rather than the observation or case notes. The coding was aided by the use of Nvivo to highlight and organise words, sentences or whole sections of text all of which were coded under multiple codes if necessary. Over the period of analysis and interpretation each document was revisited and if appropriate re-coded or additional coding applied using NVivo. Then these initial codes which were labelled and important in their own right were clustered together to generate themes initially for each participant.

The themes generated from each participant's initial transcript were used to orient the subsequent analysis (Smith and Osborn, 2003). The researcher was careful to include new issues that emerged as the analysis continued. Further analysis was then undertaken to introduce structure by making connections between themes which emerged and attaching appropriate labels. The researcher found that her skills on NVivo were limited to the early stages of data analysis; consequently the process of clustering the emergent themes together under super-ordinate themes

into a summary table was completed using Word (see examples in Appendix C). The summary table of emergent themes was condensed and edited through the process of revisiting the transcripts, notes and photos attempting to link themes and ideas, this helped to ensure that the emergent themes reflected meaning for each participant. This stage included within and between participant analysis to identify similarities, differences, echoes, contradictions and amplifications (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Mind Maps were used by the researcher to support this stage to help clarify links and relationships (Buzan, 2009). An example of a Mind Map created by the researcher during this process of clarifying, revisiting and exploring themes from within and between participants is shown in Appendix D.

A summary table including both the emergent and super-ordinate (major) themes, and referencing extracts from the original texts was created to aid organisation (see Appendix C). At this stage certain themes were dropped that were not well represented or were marginal to the phenomenon under investigation (Smith and Osborn, 2003; Willig, 2001). To do this careful consideration was given to the proportion of participants included in particular themes, any relationships to the literature and previous findings, and any data that reflected a particularly strong finding. Throughout the interpretation of the findings the researcher continually returned to the original texts to clarify the context and meaning of the extract for the participant.

6.9 Strengths and Limitations of the Research Design

Strengths of the research design include the data collection methods being child-friendly, reflected in the children's apparent enjoyment in taking photographs and engaging in the sessions. Added to which the process of data collection provided the participants with an attentive and interested listener, which was assumed to be beneficial.

Throughout the study the ethical considerations pertaining to research with children were paramount to the researcher and enabled the achievement of the four broad principles outlined by Yardley (2003) to assess the quality of qualitative research. These are:

1 Sensitivity to context. Throughout the current study this was reflected through the appreciation of the interactional nature of data collection including the

awareness of issues such as ensuring the participants are at ease, showing empathy and addressing potential power imbalances (Smith et al., 2009). The use of IPA allowed the child's voice to be heard with regards to their perspectives and understanding of the world around them.

2 Commitment and rigour. The personal commitment of the researcher ensured that the child participants were comfortable throughout the data collection sessions and rigour was reflected in the researcher's ability to be consistent in picking up cues from the participants and *"digging deeper"* when appropriate (Smith et al., 2009, p. 181).

3 Transparency and coherence. Attempts to make the research process both transparent and coherent were central, but judgement as to whether this has been achieved awaits the reader.

4 Impact and importance. Smith et al (2009) suggest that the real test of validity is whether the research tells the reader something interesting, important and useful about the phenomena.

Limitations of the research design relate somewhat to constraints of both time and resources. Ideally an *"independent audit"* (Smith et al., 2009, p. 183) by another researcher would have been beneficial. Their role would have been to check the plausibility and credibility of the data collected, the process of IPA, the tables of themes and then the final report. This is different to inter-rated reliability, and is deemed more appropriate to research utilising IPA as it allows for the possibility of many different accounts and focuses on how the research was undertaken in terms of being systematic and transparent (Smith et al., 2009).

Another limitation of the study was the omission of a potentially valuable element of the research process; respondent validation (Willig, 2001). This consists of the researcher returning to the participants to discuss the themes and refine the findings in light of their reactions (Boserman, 2009). This would have further added to the validity of the study.

Summary

This chapter has outlined that the aims of this research study were to be addressed through a qualitative, phenomenological approach. A combination of child-centred methods of data collection were chosen and justified as adhering to clear and stringent ethical and practical expectations and guidance for psychological research with children.

Chapter 7 – What Is Important, Interesting and Special?

The following three chapters present the findings from the current study in relation to the research aims (see Chapter 6). An additional chapter is included in Appendix E which contains themes which emerged about the research process and methods.

The use of participant generated photographs was an opportunity for the researcher to experience a window into the children's world. The children were invited to take photos of anything that was *"important, interesting and special"*. The photographs reflecting the individuality of each child were used as catalysts for discussions enabling exploration of issues. This chapter will focus on the people, places and things that the children chose to take photographs of, in addition to things that the children directly referred to as important, interesting and special.

The themes that emerged from the children's photographs and their interviews were identified by the researcher through consideration of factors (see section 6.8). The themes are organised according to the frequency of applicability to the most participants. The themes included: special objects, mum, school, siblings, a family network, and friends.

7.1 Special Objects

All five children identified special objects which reflected their individual perspective and circumstances. An object photographed by William was explained as a leaving present from a previous school:

> Um, I took a picture of my um tiger teddy bear because when I left in [place] um um, the school gave me um a card and a teddy bear, because I came on that day to school to say bye-bye.

Subsequent conversations highlighted that he child had only spend two weeks at that school before moving to the refuge in Blogstown. Despite this short time it would appear that he was made to feel welcome and managed to attain a sense of belonging reflected through the value of these possessions. When asked how the

teddy bear makes him feel he said *"er um I remember all of my friends because I had lots of friends there as well"* which confirmed the importance of friends during what must have been an unsettled and traumatic time.

Another photograph by this child was of a drinking glass adorned with tinsel and Christmas decorations:

> Um when um my mum was in [place] when I was at school my mum and the office ... took down some Christmas decorations and cups and when my mum decorated it for me and my sibling.

It was not the object itself that was special, but rather the circumstances under which it was created. His mother had made an effort to create something for the participant and it was this act that was represented in the photograph. This homemade Christmas decoration had been brought to the current refuge, again symbolising its value.

Harry had taken two photographs of his wrestling *("tag team")* belts from slightly different angles:

Harry:	they're my belts, that's that one ... I've got my tag team one, that's the one my dad made ...
Researcher:	so did he make it on his own or did you help him?
Harry:	I really did all the outside and dad helped me colour it in

Harry told me that the wrestling belts were easy to photograph as he *"just set them up"*. However it looked as though they had been carefully arranged suggesting that they were highly valued and demanded special attention. Like the decorated cup, it seemed that it was the investment in the objects by another person (in this case his dad) that heightened their value. Harry's other photographed object was his guitar. He did not play it and was in fact unwilling to even pluck it because he said he didn't know how. Thus its value did not seem to be its functionality but again maybe its sentimentality:

Harry:	this is really precious to me
Researcher:	is it? Where did you get it from? ...
Harry:	present
Researcher:	who gave it to you?
Harry:	my mum

All of the children except Ben took photographs of important, interesting or special objects that they wanted to share with the researcher and have in their photo-books.

Ben identified weapons as being important to him; he seemed to be confused over the content of his photographs as he identified his best photo as *"the knife".* When Ben's photographs were developed there were none of knives or any other weapons. The researcher attempted to further understand Ben's interest and his desire to include weapons in his photo-book:

Researcher:	Were there any photos that you wanted to take but didn't get the chance to take?
Ben:	Yeah ... a couple of weapons like a couple more knives.
Researcher:	Can you tell me about them?
Ben:	Like a couple more knives in different angles and like actions knives with people going like this [demonstrating stance holding weapon]
Researcher:	And why couldn't you take those do you think?
Ben:	Mum wouldn't let me... I couldn't find anyone who would hold them.

Ben seemed to consider knives as attractive accessories but demonstrated limited awareness of the potential dangers associated:

Researcher:	How do they [weapons] make you feel?
Ben:	Cool. [He started to pace up and down the room whilst talking and continued to do so for the remainder of the session]

The role of violence is further considered (see section 9.5) including a thorough discussion with specific reference to Ben (see section 11.5).

7.2 Mum

All five children in this study were living in single-parent families with their mothers. Four of the five children took two or three photos of their mothers. Although this suggested the importance of their mother, the photographs did not seem to assume any special status.

William did not take any individual photographs of his mother unlike the other three children but chose to put three photographs of his mother in which she was holding his sibling, at the beginning of his photo-book. It may have been the presence of his sibling in the photographs that supported his decision about where to place them.

Liam chose to put his mother's photograph after a number of other photographs including his siblings, his lounge and his pets, himself, and two he had taken of some friends. The photograph of his mother seemed to be regarded as less important than these others. Contrastingly, his involvement in the study spanned Mother's Day which seemed to be regarded as important. This was reflected in his desire to make the day special for his mother:

> If I get money, if I get a lot more money, my mate will take me down the town we get a couple of presents and I make her a card.

Many of the children reflected the importance of their relationship with their mother throughout their conversations and interactions. For example, four of the children wanted to immediately share their completed photo-books with their mothers. The significant and multifaceted role of the mother will be explored in subsequent chapters.

7.3 School

The importance of school was reflected through photographs taken by four of the children. Harry and David's photographs were of school buildings while the other two children took photographs of people in school.

It was clear that William valued school. At the beginning of his involvement in the study he was not attending school due to his recent arrival in the refuge and his photographs provided a record of the early days at his new school. One was of him and a classmate sharing a book. William explained:

> Um that was because, that was when I was new and I didn't have a book and we was writing in his book a line each.

The sense of the need to belong to a school community and his pride in being academically able were important to William and this was reflected throughout the sessions. He was motivated to achieve and was independent in his approach to learning and school:

William:	in the night I usually do homework like um right now or
Researcher:	do you? Oh dear, I'm interrupting now aren't I?
William:	yeah but it doesn't matter, usually I do it like some kind of work at seven or eight as well
Researcher:	right, do you do that on your own or does Mummy help you?
William:	I do it on my own

It was interesting to consider whether William's academic motivation was implicit or came from external expectations, most likely parental. Although he seemed to enjoy school and value it highly, he also appeared to need reassurance that he was doing well and that nothing was *"wrong":*

> Yeah and we went to parent's evening, I think it was last week or the other week the teacher said nothing was wrong with me.

Ben's photographs taken in school included a friend and a one of him sat on his teacher's lap in his classroom. The teacher had her arms around him; they were both smiling and looked comfortable. The following is from the conversation about this photograph: it illustrates Ben's difficulty in admitting he likes his teacher and his apparent inability to regulate his need to insult:

Researcher:	so who is this?
Ben:	(rushed voice) that's my teacher, and that's me, and that's my classroom, see you later.
Researcher:	your classroom? Tell me about it. Tell me about your teacher.
Ben:	she's gay, she's realistic and she's a lesbian ... I don't look happy I'm pretending
Researcher:	I don't think your pretending
Ben:	I like her
Researcher:	You can tell by your eyes that you're not pretending, you've got a big smile on your face and she's got a really big smile on her face. So tell me.
Ben:	that's because she's leaving and going home

Despite the initial apparent insult Ben acknowledges liking his teacher. However, the extract ends with a self-deprecating comment implying that the reason his teacher is smiling is because she is leaving and going home. This suggests that Ben does not consider himself particularly likable and deserving of her fondness, perhaps indicative of a negative self perception and low self-esteem. Ben's manner of communication was fascinating and a more thorough exploration of this will occur in the following chapter (see section 9.3).

7.4 Siblings

Three of the five children considered their siblings to be important, interesting or special. For William his younger sibling seemed to be of particular importance and this was reflected in the seven photographs taken of him. When asked to choose his best photograph his response was indicative of his high regard for his sibling. He said excitedly *"oh my baby sibling, oh the one of my baby sibling".* This focus

on his baby sibling as an important and precious feature of his life was also reflected in the way his sibling permeated his interests, for example, his sibling was his favourite thing to draw, and provided a regular conversation topic. He enjoyed sharing detailed accounts of things that had occurred involving his sibling, for example when he returned from visiting his maternal grandparents who lived abroad his response to a query about his trip was orientated around his sibling:

> Um, when I went there on the airplane, my baby sibling it was his first time so he liked it really very much, 'cos, the thing is um when he sat on my mum's lap, he reached um the pocket seat and grabbed one of the magazines and he just opened it a bit and then he closed it and then he wanted it back but then he dropped it on the floor.

The importance of younger siblings for another participant seemed equally high, although due to his circumstances it was reflected through conversations rather than in his photographs. He had managed to take a photograph of a framed photograph of himself with his two younger siblings, which hung on the wall of his living room. These measures were required because his younger siblings were in foster care. He chose this poor quality photograph as his most important and placed it at the beginning of his photo-book, reflecting the status he attributed to his siblings. Other indications of their role in his life were his two photographs of a newly decorated bedroom in his house. He explained to the researcher, *"that's going to be my sibling's room".*

David and Harry had each taken a posed photograph of their one sibling. David chose the picture of his sibling as his most important photograph.

7.5 A Family Network

For some of the children, their photographs seemed to represent belonging to a wider family network which was important to them. Harry and David had taken photographs of family members including their grandmother and an aunt. David had also taken a photograph of his cousin and chose this as his favourite photograph. He was particularly keen to share interesting facts about his different family members to highlight how they were special:

> My cousin X, has one kidney ... my cousin X, is brown, Y has four middle names, Z has two middle names ... my mum, she works in the Blogstown Hospital and X, he tells wonderful stories.

These interesting facts seemed to provide a sense of pride about his membership in an interesting family group. David seemed to be particularly proud of the fact that his cousin, featured in his favourite picture, was not white. This was brought to the researcher's attention on a number of occasions highlighting David's interest in his wider family having different ethnic and cultural background.

William highlighted the importance of his family's cultural background by referring often to *"my country"* in South Asia where both his parents were born. He seemed to also identify as being British, *"my sibling was born in Britain as well"*. He seemed proud that he had previously been having language lessons to speak his family's first language before fleeing to the refuge. The importance he placed on being able to speak this language was reflected when he spoke about his aunt who was coming to visit. Also interesting is that he seemed keen to highlight the fact that his pregnant aunt was married. This may also be reflective of strong cultural family values:

William:	she's pregnant
Researcher:	she's pregnant is she?
William:	yeah, um she's married ... um everyone that is a husband in our family all knows English and [home language]

7.6 Friends

Three of the five children took photos of friends. It must be noted that the period during which two of the children had cameras was during the school holidays, which could account for their lack of photographs of friends.

Both Ben and William had taken photographs of children living in the refuge who they classed as friends. The following extract explores Ben's photograph of his friend from the refuge and suggests that behind his tough demeanour there is a softer side, *"that's my, um, my friend X and that's my, his mum ... [he's] one and a half"*. During one of the sessions this child toddled into the playroom. It was clear from the way Ben went to cuddle and interact with the child, that he was very fond of him despite his young age.

Liam highlighted the importance of two adult friends who were often in the house when the researcher visited. When asked whether there were any photographs

that he would have liked to have taken but hadn't had the opportunity he acknowledged them:

Liam:	them upstairs but he wouldn't let me ... he don't like his photo being took
Researcher:	doesn't he want to be in the book?
Liam:	don't know, if I ask him he probably would

With prompting Liam asked them and took the photographs. Liam chose to place them before his mother in his photo-book reflecting their relative value. Attempts were made to better understand this unconventional friendship Liam had with these people:

Researcher:	what's special about X 'cos he's obviously really important?
Liam:	I don't know, I suppose he has been with me ever since I was a baby

During the participant observation session he talked more openly and explained that it was one of these adult friends who had phoned him on the day that his mother got arrested and the whole *"drama"* (as Liam described it) started. It could be that this person was special and important due to his supportive role during a very difficult time.

Liam forgot to take his camera into school but when asked what he would have taken a photograph of, mentioned two children who were his friends. However, his descriptions of them were limited and unrevealing: *"he's ok, he's quite fun"*. The researcher attempted to explore this further with Liam, but it was clear that he did not want to expand and he became evasive:

Researcher:	do you ever have friends from school come to your, come to tea or like anything?
Liam:	no (quietly)
Researcher:	why not?
Liam:	I don't know
Researcher:	would you like to?
Liam:	I think that looks a bit dodgy [referring attention back to the game]

The value of friends was most obvious for William; he had photographs of friends and talked about friends often. William was a bright, chatty and friendly child who appeared very socially able. His move to a refuge and a new school seemed to present him with a social challenge that he rose to confidently. After only a few weeks in his new school William responded to the following query with self assurance:

Researcher:	have you made some friends?
William:	um - lots and lots and lots

To further emphasise the high value of school friends, William had managed to get a photograph of his whole class including his teacher to put in his photo-book: *"because I was new at school, I brang my camera in to take a picture of the class".* This was reflective of his desire to share his speedy acquisition of classmates, including a *"best friend"* with the researcher. By the fourth visit he seemed secure in his social standing within the school and took pleasure in chatting about his friends with reference to his photographs: *"X was my first friend, he was my second friend and Y was my third friend that I met".* William's ability to fit into a new school and quickly make friends with seeming ease is reflective of his friendly nature and the meaning and value that he attributed to having a social network. William referred fondly to the friends that he had lost since fleeing his home and moving to the refuge and during one session he got emotional talking about having to say goodbye to them. The significance of this loss will be explored further in the following chapter (see section 9.4).

It would seem that both William and David recognised the benefit of having many friends as well as having best friends. David talked about two friends who he referred to as his *"best friend"* and his *"oldest friend".* Further exploration of the importance of these friendships was undertaken:

Researcher:	so what's so special about them? Cos they're obviously good friends
David:	well they all stick by my side ... well they look after me, play nice

There was a sense of perceived vulnerability reflected in his need for friends who seemed to serve a protective function. David presented as a sensitive and cautious child throughout the sessions which highlighted this vulnerability.

Ben had also taken his camera to school and had taken a photo of a friend. The following highlights the difficulties Ben had describing his relationships and his feelings:

Ben:	that's X, and in my classroom
Researcher:	and why did you take a picture of him?
Ben:	he begged me to
Researcher:	he begged you to did he? ... Tell me about X
Ben:	he's a gay man [silly, loud voice]
Researcher:	... Is he a good friend?... [Interrupted]
Ben:	a bad
Researcher:	why?
Ben:	he begs for stuff
Researcher:	Begs for stuff, like what sort of stuff?

Ben:	money ... clothes ... that's the only clothes he wears ... 'cos he hasn't got any
Researcher:	why do you think that is?
Ben:	'cos I nicked them

Ben mentioned this same friend a number of times; he appeared to be a playmate in school. Despite seeming fond of this friend Ben slipped into language that was offensive rather than acknowledge his true feelings. Often his tendency was to insult this friend: "*I'd say X is the gayest of the gay and the maddest of the mad and the gayest of the gay*". Ben demonstrated that he understood the meaning of his insulting comments when he later said *"I hope he don't find out I called him mad"*.

Summary

All of the five children took photographs or discussed special objects. Suggestions were that it was not necessarily the material worth or the functionality of the objects that made them special, but rather their sentimentality. The importance of the children's mothers emerged although not with any special status indicating that perhaps her position was assumed and somewhat taken for granted. Being made to feel welcome in a new school as well as being academically able was important for one child and difficulties in expressing feelings towards important people were clear for another.

The need to belong for some of the children was reflected through the importance of siblings and the wider family. The role of friends as special and supportive for many reasons emerged alongside some seemingly unconventional friendships.

Chapter 8 - Significant Issues

The previous chapter described what the children identified as being important, interesting or special. This chapter explores in more detail the issues that emerged through the researcher's sustained interpretative relationship with the data, as being significant to the children. Exploration of how the experiences of domestic violence impacts upon children involves identifying the things that are significant in their lives. Significant means something that is having, or likely to have a major effect. The themes that emerged were: relationships, identity, communication, uncertain times, and the role of violence. As in the previous chapter both the main themes and the subthemes are arranged in order, starting with those with highest applicability to the most participants. Thus while the theme of relationships was significant for all the children, other themes were only pertinent for some.

8.1 Relationships

The significance of relationships emerged for all the children. This is unsurprising as mum, siblings, a family network, and friends were identified by the children in the previous chapter as being important, interesting or special. Within relationships the following subthemes were identified: mother's role, belonging, omission of dad, trust, and memories.

8.1.1 Mother's Role

Unsurprisingly, these mothers like most, seemed to have multiple roles some of which were acknowledged by the children. These included being entertainers, protectors, providers, sources of affection, and opinion makers.

Mothers as Entertainers

Mothers were significant as a source of play for the children:

David: me and mum always do um like games so we can see who can win the most.

Liam: but, me and mum, when me and my mum ... played I won.

William's mature understanding that his mother's priorities lay with his younger sibling was reflected:

Researcher:	you'll have to get your mum playing some of these games, do you think she will?
William:	maybe when my [sibling] is sleeping

The role and function of play for the children will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Mothers as Protectors

The role of mothers as serving a protective function was demonstrated through the researcher's brief encounters with them whilst visiting the children. During the first session where consent was gained from both mother and child, the researcher was told by William's mother that he doesn't like to talk about what's happened.

In contrast to this protective role of mothers, William and Ben seemed to reflect a reversal of this role at times. It seemed that Ben had especially taken on the role of protector (see section 11.5). William explained that his mother's body *"ached all over"* which meant that he had had to look after her recently.

Mothers as Providers

William demonstrated the importance of being able to join in an event thanks to the provision of an Easter bonnet by his mother:

> I remember when ... there was a hat thing and all the children were in the hall at that school and even me ... we all did a hat and we all, mums made the hats and my mum did me a hat, you know straw hat and then she bought some ribbon ... she got some chickens and she got some eggs and she sticked them on my hat.

An example of the assumed functionality of mothers was the limited recognition of his mother's cleaning by Harry through his dismissive *"doesn't matter"* comment below:

Researcher:	who does most of the tidying up?
Harry:	um mom
Researcher:	does she? Oh poor mum
Harry:	well, doesn't matter

Mothers as a Source of Affection

Ben would often talk about, and to his mother in a disrespectful and demeaning manner (see section 9.3). However, he was observed being affectionate towards her: when leaving to go out with the researcher, Ben ran back to give his mother a hug and a kiss on the doorstep. Harry and David demonstrated similarly respectful and affectionate approaches towards their mothers. She in return seemed to have respect for them as individuals. This was demonstrated through her warm language and things such as maintaining special memory boxes which were shared with the researcher during the last visit.

Mothers as Opinion Makers

Another position of mother was as an opinion maker which appeared to be a powerful role. Ben attempted to explain why his mother didn't like female wrestlers:

Ben:	I don't think she likes lady wrestlers
Researcher:	... [because] they look a bit funny?
Ben:	no mum don't mind them ... there's something else about them ... do you know what some of the girl wrestlers are?
Researcher:	no, tell me
Ben:	lesbians

Ben had learned other views about women from his mother:

Ben:	you are a girl, girls always go first
Researcher:	do they? ...
Ben:	'cos my mum, you shouldn't hit a girl ... 'cos ladies always go first

8.1.2 Belonging

A sense of belonging emerged as significant in ways that included the role of family and friends, and in particular grandparents. All five children talked about their grandparents during the study. David, Harry and William gave the impression that their grandparents offered a positive aspect to their lives illustrated through comments such as William being *"very, very, very excited"* to be visiting them. Harry expressed some of the ways that his grandparents provided a sense of being special and belonging:

> I already get one pound pocket money ... from my big Nan until my birthday I get ten pounds, but every month I get five pounds.

The kindness of simple acts highlighted the significance of grandparents. Others included: *"my granddad gave me and my baby sibling a um a ride in the lift".*

For William the role of grandparents through the period of uncertainty and apprehension whilst living in refuge was more significant as although they lived abroad they appeared able to offer support when needed. During the study William and his family visited his grandparents, when they returned they had left his precious sibling behind. Unsurprisingly, William missed his sibling being around and tried to explain the situation:

> Yes, he can crawl now. My grandma and granddad called my mum and said that um, he can walk a bit but um because he can crawl for a bit, um because he is in [place] for a bit, because before the day we came back here he had a hot temperature, crying all the time and that's why my grandma and granddad said they'll keep him for a little bit.

His grandparents' supportive role seemed targeted at making this uncertain and challenging period easier for both William and his mother.

Other children's grandparents had a lesser role in their lives. For Ben it seemed as though this was something that he felt he was missing. During the participant observation session he expressed a sense of isolation explaining that he doesn't usually get many cards or presents for his birthday. He talked about his grandfather whom he doesn't see very often and indicated that he would like this to be different. Ben suggested this limited contact was due to financial limitations of travelling to visit him. Sadly Ben's opinion was that by the time he was old enough to visit him alone, his grandfather would *"probably be dead".* Ben's reflections implied isolation and a limited family network. This may offer some explanation for Ben's reaction to experiences of domestic violence including his manner of communication (see section 9.3) and the significance of violence in his life (see further in section 11.5).

Ben seemed to relate more positively to his older same-sex sibling who had not moved to the refuge. He seemed to take on his sibling's interests of liking horror films for himself, illustrating the significance of this relationship:

Researcher:	Where do you watch these films? Does your mum like horror films?
Ben:	No but my sibling does... yeah, he's obsessed with death

The *"obsessed with death"* is reflected in Ben's description of his own interests when he claimed that he was *"obsessed"* with wrestling. A significant feature of

Ben's identity is his tough demeanour and it would seem that his older sibling has influenced this desire to appear tough and able to cope with *"hard"* things:

Researcher: so what did you used to do with your sibling that was cool?
Ben: play games, play hard ones

8.1.3 Omission of dad

There appeared to be few males in the lives of the children. This was emphasised by the omission of any photographs of fathers or father figures. Three of the participants had post-separation contact with their fathers - two regularly. So the omission of a photograph of their fathers was significant. One of the participants never mentioned a father figure.

Although Harry and William chatted quite openly about their fathers throughout the sessions, David did not. The following demonstrated his level of resistance to offer any meaningful information about his father. David had previously mentioned his father so the researcher felt able to explore the issue. In the extract David and the researcher are talking about the photographs David had taken:

David: I didn't take one of my uncle because he wasn't there, he's always busy
Researcher: ... and what about your dad, you didn't take one of your dad?
David: I'm sure I did
Researcher: no, ... I don't think one came out; you could draw a picture of him...?
David: it's really hard ... it's just hard to imagine my dad without seeing him
Researcher: what's he look like?
David: a normal dad

David acknowledges the fact that he had omitted to take a photograph of his uncle because he is *"always busy"* but did not have any reason for not having a photograph of his father. This is suggestive that he made a choice not to include a photograph. David's omission of a photograph of his father is more obvious when he relays the qualities of his other family members. His tendency to do this has already been mentioned (see section 8.5) but the following extract highlights the notion of his 'family' as including cousins and an aunty but not his father:

Researcher: what would you say about your family?
David: umm, my sibling's a maniac, my cousin's a, my cousin's a cheeky bull, my mum is lovely, and my aunty tells stories

Harry was more open about his father and described his role as a co-creator of a wrestling belt:

Harry: my dad mostly did it, he just did the dark bit and I did that bit
Researcher: is he good at stuff like that? ... Tell me about him
Harry: he's good but he actually smokes

Harry seemed to admire his father and had described him previously as being *"number one"* highlighting his high status, but on this occasion he appeared to need to highlight a negative trait: that he *"smokes"*.

The reason for the omission of Liam's father seemed to be because he only saw him occasionally. He illustrated the clear boundaries that had been imposed to prevent him from talking about his father by saying, *"I'm not allowed to talk about him, so I can't help"*, whilst chatting to the researcher. The researcher had not asked about his father as it was not something that Liam had raised, so she was unsure whether it was a topic he wanted to discuss or not.

8.1.4 Trust

The capacity to trust was clearly highlighted by two of the children with reference to their older siblings. William remembered his sibling in a manner which seemed to convey a sense of mistrust:

> In the night my sibling said, my step-sibling, he said that "oh I saw the tooth fairy, she had a red dress" and I don't know if it was real 'cos he always sometimes says lies to make me laugh.

William's language *"always sometimes"* seemed to highlight that he was uncertain of when the truth was being used. The innocence appeared in the notion that William still believed in fairies and magic is discussed further (see section 10.1). At other times William talked about his older sibling, his *"step-sibling"* as not being well-behaved and that he would not be able to go to university as he didn't do well in school and went out a lot. This offered some explanation for William's apparent determination and motivation with regards to his own academic ability and achievements. It may be that William saw himself as the child who will fulfil expectations of academic success, unlike his sibling.

Ben expressed an adverse response towards one of his siblings:

Researcher: is there anybody else in your family? Have you got sisters, another brother or anybody like that?
Ben: (blows raspberry) I've got a sibling (screams)
Researcher: do you want to put anything about him in your book?
Ben: nope, otherwise I'll wind up going mentally

Ben's choice of language and his agitated nonverbal communication was strong and clearly represented negative feelings towards this sibling. Further exploration uncovered reasons why he mistrusted and subsequently disliked him:

Ben: he takes money from my mum and don't give it back ... my mum keep giving his money and it's not fair, stealing and it takes ages to pay her back
Researcher: and you worry about that do you?
Ben: yeah, it's not fair on mum and now, that's why we can't, she has to save a lot now 'cos of him.

Ben's perception that his sibling was *"stealing"* from his mother was interesting as he described his mother as *"giving him money"* which does not imply theft. However, Ben's notion of this being unfair may be due to his assumed position as his mother's protector (see section 11.5). In the final sentence he refers to *"we can't"* which suggested that his mother giving his sibling money may have impacted on what he and his mother could afford. This is particularly significant within the financially restricted situation of residing in a refuge (see section 9.4).

8.1.5 Memories

Memories are a significant tool for children who are attempting to make sense of their experiences. Children can uncover memories that reshape their current position by either confirming or refuting a previously accepted view or perspective of something that happened. Sometimes the memories shared were of specific events but other times they were more generic. Some memories conveyed a sense of history, sequence and a notion of belonging:

I just used to remember that my dad, my mum or dad told me that I used to, when I was a baby I was crawling around with just my nappy on.

Memories emerged most significantly from William who often recalled events and incidents. William's recall of specific memories tended to include his father and seemed to represent attempts to make sense of this relationship. Alongside some fond memories such as a trip abroad with his father and his sibling was his

recollection of his father pulling out one of his teeth. It conveyed a sense of uncertainty:

William: yeah, he tricked me and then he just and I said no, no, no, no and he just said come on and then I went over yeah and then he just wobbled first 'cos you know like when you sometimes people trick you, he just wobbled a bit yeah and then when I was when my eyes were looking somewhere else, he just went like that [pulling action]
Researcher: did it hurt?
William: yeah

One participant described what happened when his father's parrot went missing:

> ...and one time, you know its cage yeah, when me and my mum and my bigger sibling, that was when my mum didn't have my baby sibling ... my bigger sibling went, in the back of the house is the garden and there's this door thing where you go through and there's my grandma's house ...my dad's mum, and then it's like my mum forgot to close the gate of the house, you know and then somebody went in and stole our parrot and then when we came back the parrot's cage door was open and ... usually he was pleased if you took the parrot out

Throughout this extract it seems as though the child felt the need to clarify the context. Whether this was for himself or the researcher's benefit was unclear. This clarification included: drawing attention to the incident occurring before his sibling was born, the close proximity of his paternal grandparents home, that it was his mothers fault as she apparently forgot to close the gate despite the parrot being stolen, and that *"usually he was pleased if you took the parrot out"*. This reflected the complexity and confusion apparent in attempts to make sense of his memories of difficult experiences.

For two of the children talking about their fathers only occurred during the participant observation session, where the context was different - not at home and not being recorded. During one such session David spontaneously talked about his father when he recalled memories of sheltering from the rain with him under a tree in the local park.

8.2 Identity

During the six sessions the children offered varying degrees of insight into how they thought about themselves in terms of their both personal and social identity. The two oldest participants spoke the least about themselves and appeared the most guarded during the sessions.

David offered some insight into his sense of identity when he claimed that he was the *"best photographer in our family"* and would like to be a newspaper journalist. This implied that he thought of himself as an accomplished writer. The only other mention of his own identity was during a conversation about Halloween when he said *"I'm not a big fan of dressing up".* This seemed to confirm the idea of David seeing himself as serious and mature. In support of this notion was his refusal to include a photograph he had taken, of himself with his face painted. He offered no explanation why he did not want to include the photograph but the act of censoring the photograph was perhaps representative of a level of inner confidence.

One of the female participants identified as being similar to her mother. This was demonstrated when she asked the researcher to write down the time of her next visit:

> 'Cos I'm going to forget ... because whenever I like I go upstairs I remember I need to remember to say something, I go upstairs and like my mum, my mind gets blank and I like, I close my eyes and I say what did, what was it again.

Harry's image of himself was as an able and competitive sportsman. Various conversations alluded to this including his explanation of why he is so fast at running, *"it's 'cos I'm a footballer and ... that's how I do it when I am a goalie".*

Harry clearly did not like school and perceived the best bit of school as playtime. Attempts to explore his reasons for not liking school were revealing in an unexpected way:

Researcher:	why do you think you don't like it so much?
Harry:	oh because it's just goddy school, I hate all these goddies, they're annoying

It was clear that he saw himself as a non-believer despite attending a religiously affiliated school, or as he described it, *"a goddy school".* He passionately identified as a non-believer and openly shared this view through a number of powerful and confident statements:

> [People] should stop praying for a stupid god who doesn't even exist ... Jesus does, not God, it's just a silly myth... lots of us think that.

His statements that referred to a *'"stupid god"* and a *"silly myth"* could be construed as controversial and maybe reflective of a high level of outer confidence. In this extract he also alluded to his social identity as a member of a group of non-believers which could support his apparent confidence to share his

Researcher:	has it been a good year [in school]?
Ben:	a bad year ... I've been slapping her around the face and I've been using her as a slave ... I've been shooting her in the head, I cut her head off but then I glued back together
Researcher:	... What was the best thing that you did with her?
Ben:	threw her off a cliff
Researcher:	Go on tell me, you must have had some fun in school with her?
Ben:	Going on a school trip but that was not fun

Ben's use of untruthful or fantastical language (see also section 9.3) enabled him to evade meaningful conversation. He seemed to find it difficult to acknowledge positive experiences and feelings. This may be due to his negative core beliefs about himself as a person not worthy of such. In his fantasy world he was likely to feel able to exert power over others, in this instance by cutting off his teacher's head or throwing her off a cliff. His choice of language was interesting, particularly the term *"slave"* which represented a significant assertion of power to dominate another. This was a common feature of his communication:

Researcher:	how did you get there?
Ben:	easy, train I wish I could have had a whip and making me carry her
Researcher:	you carry her?
Ben:	no she carry me

Again he expressed a desire to have had an alternative experience where he would have been in the position of immense power and his teacher would have been subservient and carried him.

As already mentioned Ben had a tendency to insult or ridicule others despite them apparently being important to him. His domination over his mother at times appeared abusive and seemed to reflect possible prior experiences when he could have been imitating the aggressor's behaviour and language (McGee, 2000). Examples included him aggressively demanding that she *"bend over"* as he attempted to take inappropriate photographs. Also when talking about one of his photographs he said mockingly *"my mum, it's my mum, with a big big bum"*. These may also be indicative of his deeper attitudes and beliefs about gender and the value, position and function of women.

Ben appeared to desire a social identity as a member of a violent and powerful group. This was reflected in his use of language, terms such as *"sick"*, *"sharp"* and *"bling"* as well as his body language and behaviour which reflected gangster-type behaviour from in the media: *"this is what gangsters do bling bling"* whilst pulling

up his hood. To him it may seem sensible that a person like him, aggressive and mean, would fit well into such a social group, or alternatively that they could serve a protective function.

8.3 Communication

Throughout the study, all of the children engaged positively with the researcher and rapport developed. As this is a study focused on children who have experienced domestic violence, some of the themes that emerged are particularly significant as they reflect some negative communication strategies. These included avoidance and control, which are relevant to the wider topic of domestic violence and worth exploring in more depth. Both avoidance and controlling strategies can develop from the children's sense of powerlessness, which is often associated with domestic violence as power, control and dominance are central (see section 5.4 on Feminist Theory).

The next section of this chapter will explore the themes of: avoidance, controlling the conversation, and communication used to manipulate.

8.3.1 The Communication Strategy of Avoidance

There are indirect and direct strategies of avoidance. Direct strategies include a person saying *"no"* to a question or refusing to talk about an issue. Some incidences of direct avoidance in this study included:

Researcher: Right I want to ask you some stuff about this project we're doing.
Ben: No [silly voice] naughty that's naughty

Avoidance was also expressed through a combination of direct verbal and non-verbal behaviour like Ben not wanting to explore his feelings when asked what he thought of a picture of his favourite wrestler:

> Oh no no no I don't want to write anything about me [begins pacing, fiddling and climbing around furniture]

Despite such examples of direct avoidance, strategies used by the participants to avoid or evade a train of conversation tended to usually be indirect. They included changing the subject by asking a question or redirecting the researcher's attention away from a potentially contentious topic. Due to the child-centred nature of the

study the conversations tended to focus on the children's photographs as catalysts for discussion. However, the researcher also used some questioning and prompting to expand on a topic in an attempt to guide exploration around particular issues with the children. It appeared that the older two children in particular, were cautious of getting into unchartered territory where they perceived that they may feel uncomfortable or awkward. On these occasions avoidance was often used:

Researcher:	so who decided that you changed schools then?
Liam:	ah, the school
Researcher:	did you mind – how did you feel about that?
Liam:	I loved it
Researcher:	did you? ... Did anyone else change at the same time?
Liam:	can I go straight down there [referring to game]

There was something about the way that Liam said *"I loved it"* that seemed dismissive and it was clear that he did not want to talk any further about it. The nature of the research meant that he remained in control and the researcher ceased the train of enquiry. At times dismissive language made conversations arduous and it was helpful to have an alternative focus, a game or activity, to provide the child with space to feel secure and not pressurised to speak. Consequently, the pattern of conversation with Liam meant that the sessions tended not to flow organically and could be rather episodic.

Due to the multiple visits, the researcher often had the opportunity to revisit a previous topic of conversation, occasionally to be met with the same level of reluctance as illustrated below:

Researcher:	go on tell me about youth club, I've never been to youth club
Liam:	I think I told you last week
Researcher:	yeah but you didn't tell me much, you didn't give much away Liam
Liam:	your dots a little bit small there [reference to game]

On this occasion Liam bluntly changed the subject by redirecting attention to the game. This was his way of asking the researcher to stop asking questions about youth club and was illustrative of how the children remained in control of the conversation. This was an accepted part of the study and fulfilled the researcher's desire to keep the power and control on the side of the child as far as possible.

David's use of avoidance strategies were high compared to the other children, one of his sessions only lasted nine minutes as it was clear that he did not want to engage and was reluctant to continue. The researcher made a point of checking

that he still wanted to continue with the study, and reminding him of his right to withdraw. He did want to continue. Interestingly when David went out of the house with the researcher he engaged more naturally throughout the session. He appeared more relaxed and chatted about topics that he had not previously mentioned, including his father (see section 9.1). The same happened with Liam and Ben. Their styles of communication changed significantly when out of their home environment. Reasons for this contrast could include feelings of loyalty towards their mothers who were usually at home, or the fact that the sessions were recorded.

8.3.2 Controlling the Conversation

There were a number of occasions when children attempted to control the conversation during the sessions. As the ethos of the study was to encourage the children to feel in control this was acceptable. What was interesting was the manner in which some of the children gained a sense of control. Some used direct strategies:

Researcher:	what do you think is going to be the best one?
David:	you'll have to find out later when you print them off

When talking about one of his photographs David used a direct approach to control the photographs to be included in his photo-book:

David:	I don't like that one
Researcher:	...you don't want it in your book?
David:	no
Researcher:	... why not?...
David:	I just don't like it

An indication of the children's sense of power and control was reflected through their language whilst playing games:

David:	I'll let you have the next one
Harry:	I just let you have that
Ben:	I let people off, sometimes - say if people are short of money I let them off

In the early sessions Ben seemed to feel threatened and anxious, reflected through his verbal and non-verbal communication being agitated and aggressive. During the first session he made sexualised references to strip clubs and pole

dancing, as well as reference to weapons and violence. The researcher felt slightly intimidated. He also appeared to regularly lie. When discussing the camera and his photos the following conversation took place:

Researcher:	Did you take it to school with you?
Ben:	yeah, but I only took a picture of someone's bottom ... one of my friends pulled his pants down and I took a picture of it

When describing another photo it seemed his intention was to shock:

Researcher:	And that picture, where was that taken?
Ben:	Up my arse

The reason for his aggression and untruthfulness was not always clear and appeared to be a common feature of his behaviour:

Researcher:	What about your old bedroom, what was that like?
Ben:	there were guns everywhere, machine guns, machete guns

However, as the sessions continued and rapport developed Ben seemed to become more relaxed and consequently the level of aggression and anxiety, reflected through behaviours such as pacing, reduced dramatically. It could be that he was testing the researcher, attempting to provoke a response that would allow him to see how powerful he was and how much control he really could have over the sessions.

Some of the participants seemed to anxiously anticipate saying the wrong thing, thus not wanting to explore their feelings. It seemed that they somehow thought they may unravel the past and end up in conversations with which they did not feel comfortable or that they had little control over. In contrast, when the children felt comfortably in control of the conversation their communication styles could be quite different, for example, David was animated and conversational when talking about his favourite television programme.

8.3.3 Communication to Manipulate

Attempts to manipulate others were made by Ben in particular. During one session when the researcher returned with his photos, he was keen for his mum to stay in the room and used strategies including aggressive demands and childlike neediness:

Mum:	let's look at the photographs
Ben:	Don't poke me (angrily directed to mum)
Mum:	Sorry, you look at the photographs first and then I go and leave you to it
Ben:	But I love you (whiney voice)
Mum:	Yes but I'm in the middle of making my breakfast
Ben:	you asked to see the photographs and you asked to leave and eat your breakfast like a lady (shouting, aggressively at mum)
Researcher:	... shall we look at them first and then show mum?
Ben:	No, mum stays here (tapping table - calm and childlike voice)

On two separate occasions when the researcher asked whether Ben wanted to play a game of cards he responded with the following comments: *"only if you let me do a wrestling move on you"* and *"no that's naughty too [silly voice], I only like people who give me presents".*

The following demonstrates the power that a child can have over an adult. How and why Ben knows about this dangerous use of power was not known, but may reflect the level and nature of the abusive situation he experienced:

Ben:	One of my friends pulled his pants down and I took a picture of it
Researcher:	Oh dear, so when I take them into the shop to be developed they could ask, they could look at me very strangely thinking why have you got a picture of a bottom. Oh dear. Right I'm going to lay them out [playing cards]
Ben:	I could get you arrested for that (showy voice)

In contrast, Ben also demonstrated an ability to be considerate, friendly and kind. At these times he had control over his choice of language and an understanding of appropriate behaviour and manners. His apparently manipulative communication strategies decreased as the researcher and Ben developed a positive rapport. His ability to be polite, caring and kind were expressed through small gestures such as saving a piece of cake for the researcher. At the end of the final session he asked "*are we going to see each other again?"*

8.4 Uncertain Times

For three of the children a theme to emerge was about the fluidity of their lives, including uncertainty and loss. This seemed to link with the notion of an 'adversity package' (Rossman, 2000, see section 3.7) where multiple stressors often cluster together in the lives of children who experience domestic violence. The following

themes represent a general sense of uncertainty in the lives of some of the children: loss, change, and apparent financial difficulties.

8.4.1 Loss

All of the children involved in this study had experienced loss. At its most basic level domestic violence meant that their childhoods had been disrupted and the security of feeling safe and protected at home had been destroyed. Individually a much greater sense of loss affected the different aspects of their daily lives. For two of the participants domestic violence meant that they accompanied their mothers to seek sanctuary in a refuge. This meant the loss of their home, possessions, contact with family members and friends, and their sense of familiarity in a community (see Appendix F).

This fluidity of life and the subsequent losses was reflected by William who described an opportunity for his mother to visit his school to talk about temples following them initially leaving the family home. It seems that he had begun to settle in school and get a sense of belonging before being wrenched away again to move towns:

> Um, when we were in [place] we was learning about churches and then I haven't been to a temple in [country] ... the teacher said um said to my mum that show pictures of that one in [place] but we couldn't do it because we moved here.

Through his conversations he created an image of a child who previously lived in a comfortable home with lots of possessions. He talked about holidays to various destinations and hobbies such as dancing and swimming lessons. Despite talking about possessions he had lost, a deeper insight into losses of opportunities, friendships, routines and the familiar seemed apparent:

William:	I don't even have my, I don't even have my swimming costume and even when I was in the old house I did have a swimming costume and then it went too small
Researcher:	too small, so you need a new one anyway
William:	I forgot my goggles there, it's like everything there, I can't get it [little nervous laugh]

The words *"there"* and *"old house"* imply that he had already separated himself from the old life and all that went with it.

Ben talked openly and fondly about his dog and cats that he had lost since leaving his family home. His uncertainty about getting his beloved dog back was obviously a difficult topic for him to discuss so he seemed to avoid acknowledging it entirely:

Researcher: she sounds like a lovely dog, so you're gonna get her back?... when's that gonna happen?

Ben: I'm not sure, when we get a house, but the funniest thing is my cat's head was in her mouth and her legs were in like that [continuing a recollection from earlier]

8.4.2 Change

The theme of change emerged for some of the children. The enormity of change that accompanied the children's potentially distressing and upsetting experiences included living in refuges and being taken into local authority care. The threat of discovery and the fluid, sudden movement of people within the refuge did not go unnoticed:

Researcher: it seems very quiet here today William, is it quiet?

William: um – because X's gone somewhere and Y's gone ... 'cos the husband knowed they're here.

The concerning speed at which the spaces left by families moving on, were filled, and the turnover of rooms was acknowledged by William who said *"um somebody new moved in but then they went"*. This represented the scope and reality of experiences of domestic violence for so many women and children.

One of the participants was in the position to compare refuges as he had stayed in another refuge briefly prior to moving to the refuge from where he became involved in the study. He could recognise the relative positives of the current refuge and the significance of issues including cleanliness:

Uhuh, um and then um at [place] it was very, very, very dirty that's why the office had to put um this cloth over the table in, because one, everyone um when everyone ate they didn't clean it.

Liam's experiences of domestic violence led to him being taken into local authority care for a period of time. It was unclear of the specific circumstances surrounding this and how much could be directly attributed to the domestic violence. At the time of the study he had only been back with his mother for a few months. He described his multiple moves:

Liam:	I was at Y's before, after, I was at Y's, I went to, I went from here to X's, from X's to Ys, from Ys to my foster carers and from my foster carers back here again
Researcher:	oh you've had lots of moves then
Liam:	well, I did go to another foster carer ... but they wasn't brilliant ... no, I was only there for a week
Researcher:	what was foster care like?
Liam::	not very (pause) good

During the participant observation he talked in more detail about his experiences and calculated that he had moved nine times in two years, during which he had lived with various family members and foster carers. It is difficult to imagine how all these moves affected him and whether he felt rejected when each placement broke down and he was moved on. Of particular significance was the fact that placements with family members were unsuccessful. The following extract is suggestive of his feelings towards one of his female family members with whom he resided briefly:

Researcher:	and what's she like?
Liam:	she's ok ... she ain't as funny as my mum and Y ... she is a bit moany
Researcher:	what does she moan about?
Liam:	anything she can think of he moans at ... I calls her moaning X

His younger siblings whom he identified as being very important (see section 8.4) were not placed with him and remained with foster carers despite him returning home.

Changes for William included a significant, temporary change to his family structure following a visit abroad to his grandparents. He and his mother returned without his sibling. Below William describes how his sibling has started to walk, whilst staying with his grandparents, which added to William's sense of missing him greatly:

> And I don't know because when they, because in the night yeah, because my baby sibling's got a hot temperature, he could walk a bit, just one or two steps but he falls down, but a bit now he's got better ... and that's why every night like yesterday night my grandma and granddad said that he keeps on saying to my gran, he's not saying, but wants my grandma to hold his hand so he can walk to our room because he wants to see his mum and me ... because he misses us.

Despite being a bright and articulate child William often appeared to lack clarity and seem unsure about his situation and the plans for the future. This could reflect the general sense of uncertainty surrounding his life at the time, or the lack of adequate communication between mother and child. There is a sense that he

was not being kept informed, which must add to his sense of powerlessness and lack of control during a difficult time. As the sessions progressed over a number of months, this uncertainty seemed to slowly reduce and a plan for the future emerged. William seemed a lot brighter in the final session:

William:	we're staying in Blogstown
Researcher:	you are... oh, that's good news
William:	yeah, because my mum likes Blogstown

8.4.3 Apparent Financial Difficulties

It was clear that some of the children appeared to experience financial difficulties as part of the adversity package. William seemed the most conscious about the apparent financial difficulties illustrated through comments such as *"I don't have um, when we go out to dinner um, I don't have any money"*.

Contrastingly, Liam seemed to accept his financial situation and basic standard of living as part of everyday living. The following conversation which explored a photograph of his bedroom where a kettle sat next to his bed demonstrated his pragmatic approach and adaptability in adversity:

Researcher:	what have you got a kettle in your bedroom for?
Liam:	'cos if the hot water goes then I have to run all the way downstairs and then run all the way back up the stairs with the kettle ... so I tell mum right the kettle from downstairs is now staying in my room [bossy tone]
Researcher:	so, what do you do with it, make cups of tea?
Liam:	no, right when the hot water goes dead ... so I can have a bath and a wash at night
Researcher:	oh, I see, so does the water go off quite a lot?
Liam:	no, not really ... only when we don't have no gas or electric

One impact of having limited financial resources was the lack of access to a vehicle or availability of personal transport. This heightened the perception of isolation and reliance on others, and was raised both by Ben and William. For example, William talked about having to walk to his new school which was a long way. Similarly, Ben described the plan to go out to celebrate his mother's birthday, *"mum said we won't be able to get a car and will have to walk home and it's miles home"*.

8.5 The Role of Violence

What is known about all of the participants in this study was that they have experienced domestic violence. What is unknown was the nature of their experiences. At the most optimistic level it can be assumed that, as has been suggested in the literature they were aware of violence and experienced the associated tensions and aftermath (see section 3.4). Unfortunately there is also the possibility that some were direct witnesses of violence or recipients of abuse. Therefore violence had been a feature of these children's lives to varying degrees. This section on the role of violence has been organised into the themes of boundaries of fun and fighting, and of reality and fantasy.

8.5.1 Boundaries of Fun and Fighting

Boundaries were a significant issue with regards to violence in these children's lives. What was interesting was that for three of the children the boundaries between *"play fighting"* or *"cat fighting"*, and real fighting or violence seemed blurred. Difficulties these children had distinguishing between play fighting and other violence are alluded to by Harry when talking about a fight he had:

Researcher:	then what did you do?
Harry:	I pushed him and he pushed me and then we just started fighting
Researcher:	oh dear, did it hurt when you two were fighting?
Harry:	no because we did cat fighting really, just chucking each other down
Researcher:	cat fighting, so it wasn't really to hurt each other fighting?
Harry:	yeah, we were angry at each other

Although Harry initially conceived this fighting to be *"cat fighting"*, implying that it was not serious or intended to hurt, he immediately appeared to contradict himself by implying that not only was the intention to hurt each other but also that they were both angry. He appeared to make the connection between anger and the intention or likely outcome that someone will be hurt, which suggests that he does not have alternative strategies of self-regulation or non-violent methods of conflict resolution.

Liam demonstrated some equally conflicting messages about *"play fighting"* being funny, when explaining why his adult friend was so important:

Liam:	he's so funny
Researcher:	is he?
Liam:	yesterday he decided to beat me up with Y
Researcher:	oh, what do you mean?
Liam:	him and Y kept play fighting with me ... X had my leg, Y had my arms and they were giving me the birthday beats, it wasn't my birthday.

Liam began with *"he decided to beat me up"* which does not indicate playful behaviour. Those involved in the play fight with Liam were adults including a family member. Liam seemed confused about the reason for this play fighting as it was not his birthday, whilst simultaneously normalising it had it been his birthday. As already mentioned Liam had a tendency to be dismissive in his communication and avoid certain topics, however when discussing this incident he spoke in a manner that suggested he was trying to make sense of it, and that it was an accepted part of life in his household.

Researcher:	so do you mind play fighting?
Liam:	I don't mind it but they do get a bit out of hand at times ... Y tickled me there, X wouldn't let go of my legs, I nearly fell on my head

Whilst leaving the home following a session and saying goodbye to Liam and his mother, Liam said something in jest to his mother and jabbed at her arm. His mother's response was to model Liam's behaviour and jab him back in the arm illustrating that low level aggression and physical acts of violence were a constant reality for Liam.

A similar level of confusion about the boundaries of *"play fighting"*, pain and real fighting were raised by Ben:

Ben:	I beat X up. He was on the floor and I was like this sitting on the sofa ... and then I literally jumped on him and when he was like that he I went bam, boom [actions] and booted him ... he got up and was like in agony and started fighting me ... he got my arm and pulled me back, he got me like that I kicked him in the stomach
Researcher:	Do you mean to hurt him? ... [Interrupted]
Ben:	No but we were play fighting 'cos then he punched me in the stomach and then he pinned me on the floor but when he tried to punch me he grabbed my leg and he was like trying to kick him, my other leg, I booted him in the cheek
Researcher:	Oh, it sounds like you hurt each other
Ben:	um yeah and then I like did a jump I'd like that, he's there, this is my leg [pointing] smack in the back ... and then I stamped on him in the back of the back I went to walk away and he just got me like that, elbows and feet like that and make him beg for mercy, pull his arm back and get him in a master lock and both get him in an arm lock like that and they ...

	and he bit me, he was biting me like 'cos that's what wrestlers do, they like bite you
Researcher:	So you are allowed to bite, are you sure?
Ben:	Yeah when he was biting me with my other hand I got of his other arm and punched him in the back of the head ... then I got a machine gun and started shooting him

The first few words imply that Ben was beating the other child up, but midway through he referred to *"play fighting"* although his description of the level of violence does not appear playful. He was animated in his description of this event using actions to demonstrate and clarify. It is not clear who was in the more powerful position although Ben's use of language included *"make him beg for mercy"* suggested his perception of personal power and dominance. However, the concepts of mercy and power are not typically associated with play. Equally the presence of biting and his attempt to justify it as something that wrestlers do, offered further understanding of how he was regulating his behaviour. This raises the issue of the appropriateness of wrestlers as role models (see section 11.4).

The final significant aspect of Ben's recall was the apparent ease with which he slipped from the real into the unreal at the end with his description of his fight, which he described as ending with a machine gun. This may have offered an alternative and more satisfactory conclusion especially if he was not victorious, or had been hurt or embarrassed in the fight. His imaginary use of a machine gun allowed him to maintain his tough image in front of the researcher.

8.5.2 Boundaries of Reality and Fantasy

The powerful force of the media for children is becoming an increasingly significant issue as the level and ease of technology continues to evolve at an exponential rate. All five of the children were involved with media such as: watching television and films, playing games on various computer games consoles, and listening to music on a daily basis. The impact of the media appeared most significant for Ben who often became engrossed in detailed recall of violent scenes from films or games. He would typically become very animated using actions to re-enact what he had seen whilst providing a fast paced verbal monologue:

> Cos the Undertaker [a wrestler], one of them has got a chair they've chair he's kicked the (unclear) in the ribcage and smacked them on the, he pulled the chair up in the air and then it landed on him and then walked around it to the other side and then he got him like that and got him like that and then he went boom [bring imaginary head down onto his knee] in his stomach and then he let go and when he come down, his head, he kneed him in the face when he come down and he was bleeding.

Ben did not seem able or willing to acknowledge the pain of injuries afflicted upon the wrestlers: he seemed to lack a sense of empathy even when attempts were made to draw his attention to the possibility. Ben appeared to describe in detail the fights and injuries sustained in a detached way. He seemed to admire the violence itself. When asked what was so special about his favourite wrestler he said:

> He's special because when he tries to punch you he pulls your arm back and kicks you in the face [acting out moves] and then he boots you in the head.

Harry also showed a significant interest in wrestling and like Ben had lots of knowledge and interest, had seen many fights on television, had wrestling paraphernalia and seemed to admire wrestlers as heroic figures. The difference was that Harry seemed more in awe of the athletic qualities of the wrestlers than the violence itself:

> He was really athletic ... Geoff Hardy [a wrestler] is the most 'though, 'cos he's like that [action], he can be up on a cage and he goes argh and just jumps off it, he can jump off the State Building, he goes like that argh, and jump off and he'll flip at the last second.

Harry seemed able to balance his fascination with wrestling realistically with the potential dangers and possibility of serious injury:

> Yeah he done it [flips] a lot and he's broke his neck ... 'cos it's his brother they were fighting him, so what he did is he holded his neck still that's the ... 'cos one move will just click it and you wouldn't be able to move ever.

Harry could see the boundaries of this staged violence to acknowledge when wrestlers had been seriously injured and in need of medical attention. Contrastingly, there appeared times when this message was portrayed as a further theatrical addition to a wrestling programme which added to the confusion and blurring of the boundaries of reality and fantasy for Ben:

> Yeah they had to carry him off, paramedics rushed over you could actually see blood on his face and then Kane [a wrestler] jumped off the ropes again and landed on him, who just got really badly beaten and landed on one of the paramedics, he did by accident.

Ben was very clear that he wanted to be a wrestler when he grew up and seemed to revel in the idea of being in a position of power and dominance. When exploring Harry's aspirations, his response appeared more grounded in reality. He explained why he did not want to be a wrestler: *"too much injury ... someone's dead from wrestling"*.

Unlike Harry, Ben's fascination with violent media stretched beyond wrestling and into games and films. Ben's computer games seemed to provide him with an opportunity to live the action and violence, *"all I did was one shot in the shoulder and it blew his arm off and then ... I left the rest of my men to kill him"*. This was reflected by the use of *"I"* and *"my"* which provide an explicit sense of power with no consequences. This provided further reinforcement for his self-identity as domineering and mean, and placed the violence as a normal and acceptable part of everyday life.

As already mentioned weapons were important to Ben (see section 8.1). This was reflected through his comments such as, *"I'll show you the weapon of my choice"*. There were a number of occasions when Ben made it clear that the need for him to defend himself and use weapons could come at any time:

Researcher:	So will it be alright if I come and see you next week and bring the photos with me?
Ben:	Yeah, I'll be, I'll be here with a crowbar and I'll ...
Researcher:	You'll be here with a crowbar?
Ben:	Yeah, I'll lock the door with a crow bar.
Researcher:	To let me in or not to let me in?
Ben:	Not to let you in (unclear) I'll let you in but then I'd take you hostage.

A further demonstration of this blurring of the boundaries between what was and was not acceptable in terms of everyday behaviour and violence is below. It would appear that Ben is unable to make this distinction and as a result used inappropriate and threatening language to reflect his feelings of powerlessness and the threat of the unknown:

Ben:	I'll be at home with a knife next time
Researcher:	A knife?
Ben:	A knife yeah, two knives know you can get two knives here [indicating towards his ankles] ... two knives here strapped to my legs, like a pen knife stuck here, a multi-tool stuck here an arm dagger strapped here, a (unclear) strapped here, a (unclear) here, a assault rifle and a flame thrower on my back and a bazooka [pointing to where on his body they would be attached]
Researcher:	And what do need all those for? Tell me

Ben:	Anybody who walks to the door, I could shoot them
Researcher:	Anybody? Even me?
Ben:	Yeah, I 'd kill you
Researcher:	What about all the people who work here?
Ben:	Yeah I'd go [violent actions] pull a knife on them

Summary

The themes which emerged as significant issues for the children included different relationships. The multiple roles of mothers and those of other family members and friends provided a sense of belonging and security for the children. Also significant was the absence of these relationships. This was especially noticed of fathers, who were omitted from the children's photographs altogether and from much of their conversation. The children's sense of identity affects how they interact with the world around them. For some, their reluctance to reveal much about themselves provided a clear, but silent message. For others it was clear that their core beliefs shaped their attitudes and behaviour, as well as their wider social identity including issues to do with gender, role models and aspirations.

Direct and indirect communication strategies enabled some of the children to remain in control of conversations and protect themselves from anticipated powerlessness. The importance of rapport with the researcher to decrease feelings of anxiety as well having sessions out of the home environment, impacted on their willingness to talk more freely. The uncertainty created by domestic violence and the impact of loss and change had varying degrees of personal significance and meaning for each child. The adaptability of some children to tolerate and cope with adversity was remarkable.

Although the role of violence did not emerge as a prominent theme for all the children, its significance to specific children demonstrated confusing messages about the normality and acceptability of fighting and violence. Similarly the blurred boundaries between reality and fantasy, where wrestlers and action heroes are role models is an area that requires considerable thought where such vulnerable children are concerned.

Chapter 9 - Children's Perceptions of Life

The previous two chapters have analysed what children consider important, interesting and special: as well as the issues that have emerged as being significant to their lives. This chapter explores in more detail how the children perceive themselves as part of the wider world. It looks at how their perceptions about being a child affect how they interpret, negotiate and feel about their lives and the impact of this on their interactions with people and daily events. The themes that emerged included: being a kid, play, perceptions of school, and perceptions of other adults.

9.1 Being a Kid

During the sessions all the participants were asked what it was like *"being a kid"*. Their responses represented a child's perspective and the following subthemes emerged: believing in magic, having fun, negative aspects, and physical attributes.

9.1.1 Believing in Magic

The participation in child-orientated events and notions of magic were a major part of being a child for William. He made references to the *"tooth fairy"* on a number of occasions highlighting the possibility of magic:

William:	and I, um my friend X in [place], said that you should write a letter to your tooth fairy, because I had my tooth come out yeah and he told me to write a letter, that was the first time I wrote a letter and guess what my fairy's name is?
Researcher:	I don't know
William:	Y and I said, my friend named X he's got a tooth fairy called V and she writes to me and she's my best friend in fairy land

In order for such a magical child-orientated notion to occur in William's life there must have been promotion of these ideas from those around him. In Chapter 9 William makes reference to his older sibling supporting this idea when he referred to him seeing the tooth fairy's red dress (see section 9.1). The following refers to the maintenance of magical views over the Christmas period when he visited his grandparents:

> I gave him [Santa Claus] milk, I gave him carrots and then I gave him crisps and in the morning um there was presents laying on the floor, one of them was my baby sibling's 'cos they was a different colour than all the others ... and then I looked at the table and the milk was all gone, one bite was in the carrot and he took a few, he ate a few crisps.

The creation of an environment in which fantastical childhood ideas can be maintained implies one that is child-centred and reflects the value of a childhood where a focus is on children having fun, believing in possibilities and retaining innocence for as long as possible. Such an environment was illustrated when William described his old bedroom:

Researcher:	well what was your old bedroom like?
William:	it was all purple, and then in the night, I don't know how but it was before Christmas day, in the night yeah when I was sleeping yeah, I was sleeping and then suddenly in the morning and my bed changed into a different quilt and that
Researcher:	wow, and what do you think happened?
William:	Santa Claus did it 'cos he ... went into my room as well
Researcher:	wow, and he came to your actual bed you were sleeping in?
William:	yeah and, 'cos I was sleeping and suddenly my pillow in the morning had purple butterflies and blanket with butterfly on and even the bottom bit was purple butterflies and there was a proper butterfly, you know like the princess's thing.

Such magical childhood events provide a sense of being valued by those around them who invest in their creation and maintenance. For Harry the participation in child-orientated events namely his impending birthday party highlighted his perception of the role of friends to create special occasions:

> Oh, my party, I'm going to have a normal party, and everyone's gonna, I'm gonna need four people to help me, no five people to help me, all gonna walk out and we're all gonna make these Ghostbusters suits and we're all gonna walk in and all the lights are gonna go off and all these stage lights are gonna be down at the front .... [singing] someone strange will be walking in the room.

This reflects his role and position with his peers and his desire to be the showman. Harry seems to like to be the focus of attention and to make other people happy.

9.1.2 Having Fun

The following highlights Harry's fun manner where he described teasing his swimming teacher in order to make the other children laugh:

> Every time my teacher says um 'one two three go under', he says where's Harry, where's Harry and looks up then like I pop up behind him and when he looks round I pop down , jump up behind him again and when he's looking away I swim back to my place.

Reflective of his communicative style (see section 9.3) David was non-committal and reluctant to share his thoughts about what it was like being a child:

Researcher:	tell me about what it's like being a kid...
David:	fine, it's fun
Researcher:	... what are the things that are fun about being a kid? ...
David:	I don't really know actually

This seemed to indicate that he believed that childhood should be fun but that he was not able, or willing to share with the researcher what it meant to him.

9.1.3 Negative Aspects

Ben seemed to find little that he thought was positive about being a kid and implied that his childhood was focused on becoming an adult when he could access censored films and computer games:

Researcher:	Can you tell me about what you think it's like being a kid?
Ben:	I don't know ... It's boring... because you can't watch adult DVDs

The term boring implied that there is little else which interested him, or it may have represented an easy response. He often referred to things being *"boring"* including school and his home environment. The implication could be that childhood was not something Ben was particularly enjoying perhaps due to his desire to be involved in activities that are deemed unsuitable. Below Ben describes his home environment:

Ben:	There's no one, there's nothing to do
Researcher:	what would you like to be doing?
Ben:	watching, playing 18 year old games

Although Ben seemed to lack the ability to entertain himself except from through the media, he was aware of some perceived benefits of being a child:

Researcher:	So do you think you've forgotten or anything I need to know, that you haven't told me?
Ben:	getting in as much fights as you can while you're a kid

Ben seemed to value the chance to have an attentive listener who allowed him to talk about things that interested him. As the sessions continued he became increasingly conversational and asked lots of questions. During a conversation about films Ben asked *"what's comedy?"* which was perhaps reflective of the lack of fun and innocence present in his childhood.

9.1.4 Physical Attributes

Harry's response to the researcher's query about what is the best bit about being a child reflected his focus on the positive physical attributes of being small: *"you can fit through small gaps ... there's a place outside that you fit in if you're really small"*. He seemed proud of his ability to fit into small spaces where others cannot go: *"that's why I like small gaps too... with skinny gaps like that I can get through easy and X can't"*.

9.2 Play

Due to the methodological approach play was a feature of the research process (Appendix E considers this further). However, for William, David and Harry play was perceived to be an important part of their daily lives. Play featured in terms of having opportunities to play, having space to play, and having other people to play with. These three children chose to go to a park during the participant observation visit where they engaged in physical play activities.

For William the playroom in the refuge was a key place to be with the other children:

Researcher:	which is the room you spend the most time in when you're here?
William:	ah, the playroom
Researcher:	... and what do you usually do in here?
William:	I play with X and Y, I um just play games like hide and seek ... because when somebody's counting, we can hide under the bean bags

The significance of having this space to play was highlighted when he compared it with a previous refuge he had stayed in, highlighting the positive attributes of playroom's size and that it was always open. The presence of this designated space for the children seemed to allow them the freedom to express themselves and to play in an unstructured way:

> Yeah, those two are siblings, but the big one, the oldest sibling like, we know he likes to play with us but he's always messing it up, we let him play with the chairs, we were like standing on the chairs and it's like um and afterwards we would jump on the beanbags and it was really funny and then he just throwed the chairs all about and that and then one of the chairs broke.

William's social confidence and friendly nature allowed him to adopt a role within the refuge as someone who could create play opportunities and lead games with other children. During the sessions he was always keen to play a game and was

proud of his ability to be imaginative in play, *"we could play a game 'cos I usually make up games"*.

Despite Ben not appearing to feel positively about being a child, his play in school seemed commonplace:

> We always play Terminator, and we put make-up on and when there's another vampire film, and we play that, it's sick! There's a good vampire and he's a boy and we play number two 'cos it's the best and he has two handguns here [pointing] ... and basically there's a werewolf and a vampire and he's a goody vampire, and there's an evil vampire going around killing people.

His language which included *"always"* and on another occasion *"we team up"* suggested that he has friends to play with who share similar interests. The play he described reflected his fascination with action and horror films (see section 9.5).

9.3 Perceptions of School

General perceptions of school from the children included:

Harry:	I hate it, well I have to say playtime [is his favourite part]
Liam:	I don't really like writing that much
David:	it's a nice school

As already discussed school for William was imperative and his academic ability and social success were important features of his personality (see section 8.3). His description of his new school was illustrative of his feelings and his sense of belonging, *"[school] is a little school but they say is like a big family"*. It seemed as though school provided something more, perhaps security, as suggested when the researcher collected him from school to take him out: William waited for the researcher in the classroom with the teacher even though all the other children had come out into the playground.

Harry struggled with the religious affiliation of his school and this seemed to dominate much of his attention during sessions where school was explored (see section 9.2). His description of school was *"a godly school, they believe in God ... and it's annoying"*.

Harry talked about playing as something that he would prefer to be doing than going to school:

Researcher:	what would you prefer to be doing than doing that?
Harry:	um playing wrestling

Liam mentioned *"learning support"* as a place that he goes in school at break and lunchtimes, exploration of his perception of this suggested that he was socially isolated from his peers both in school and at home (see section 8.6).

9.4 Perceptions of Other Adults

Some of the children had positive perceptions of the other adults in their lives. For instance William's new class teacher had obviously made him feel welcome in a short time and he thought positively about her. When chatting about the whole class photograph, William commented that his friend was smiling, *"um, because Mrs. X is tickling him"*. Equally Harry's positive views about his new teacher seemed to be linked to his perception that she engaged in fun, childlike activities which he also enjoyed. He said she is *"very nice, she dresses up for Halloween"*.

William's overwhelmingly positive views about the workers in the refuge was reflected when asked why he had chosen to take a photograph of him with one of the workers. He said, *"because she um because she's one of my friends as well"*. His perspective that this woman could be his friend highlighted his high regard for adults, his social confidence and ability to trust others. He was aware of the qualities that were desirable in the adults that surround him and acknowledged that *"they help everyone's mum"*. He further explained *"because all of them are very nice and kind and looks after people in the house"*. William wanted adults to be *"nice"*, *"kind"* and helpful and this was reflected through his friendly and amicable approach to other people.

Ben seemed to mistrust adults, a notion that was reinforced by a taxi driver who took him to school:

Researcher:	How long does it take you to get there [school]?
Ben:	About an hour and a half ... but it normally takes 2 hours ... 'cos they're always making visits to other people
Researcher:	Oh they pick up other people as well do they?
Ben:	No, they pick up like, they pick up their daughters (unclear) to where they work, near [place] he drives half a mile to get them and then drives them home

He seemed to feel that the behaviour of the taxi driver was not only prolonging his long journey to school, but also breaking the rules, which was unfair. Based on his experiences he had developed a strong dislike for the taxi driver:

Researcher:	Do you chat to him or ...[interrupted]
Ben:	(quick response) no, I never chat to him ... he's really annoying... he always makes stops um when he's not meant to

Ben appeared uncomfortable with the conversation. This was respected by the researcher who refrained from any further queries. It was not clear whether he felt able to take any action about this perceived injustice. It seemed as though he was willing to tolerate the situation, which was perhaps reflective of his sense of powerlessness and the lack of faith that he would be listened to, or taken seriously by adults in his life.

Summary

For some of the participants childhood was about innocence, fun, having space, time and others to play with and believing in magic. For others, such opportunities were not so obvious and childhood appeared to represent a period of waiting before becoming an adult. The children's perception of school and other adults in their lives reflected mixed experiences including notions of support, friendship, trust and mistrust.

Chapter 10 - Discussion

The findings outlined in the previous three chapters highlight how children's lives are very diverse and those who have experienced domestic violence are not a homogeneous group. Children all have their own experiences, concerns and perceptions about their lives which are influenced both in the short and long-term by factors including age, cultural and ethnic background, socio-economic status, gender, disability and their own resilience (Hester et al., 2007). The methodology employed enabled the collection of data which was rich and complex, and which offered an insight into how the children engaged with their lives and their circumstances following experiences of domestic violence. They were active social agents (Ridge, 2003) who were permitted to become active participants in the research process, sharing their own story in their own way.

As already mentioned domestic violence is identified within ECM as a cause of vulnerability in children as it has the potential to seriously undermine their ability to achieve across all five domains of the ECM agenda: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being (Local Government Association, 2006). Although nationally children's services have been restructured in an attempt to ensure all children to achieve these outcomes, the needs of those who have experienced domestic violence remain at risk of being overlooked due to the secrecy, fear and shame typically associated with domestic violence (Local Government Association, 2006).

The following section will reflect upon the findings of the current study and place them within the existing body of psychological knowledge, theories and research. It will aim to outline any new insights into the children's perceptions and understanding of their lives.

This chapter is organised into exploring the following areas:

- the family including discussion about mothers, children's roles, gender issues and fathers,
- social networks,
- barriers to communication,

- a child's environment and culture, including consideration of the role and influence of the media,
- the impact of experiences of domestic violence on Ben,
- and consideration of psychological theory.

10.1 The Family

For most of the children a sense of belonging was apparent through their photographs of special objects which seemed to reflect personal memories and a sense of being valued as individuals by family and/or friends. The importance and significance of family was demonstrated explicitly when four of the children chose a photograph of a family member as their most important: in three cases this was a sibling.

What is evident from the current study is that children's views of family are fluid and diverse and that the perceptions of children about family life involving friends and extended family members, contrasts with policymakers' perceptions (Walker et al., 2008). A child's perspective of their family reveals a much more complex and dynamic experience of who is considered a family member (Walker et al., 2008). This was particularly obvious for David when he was asked to tell the researcher about his family and subsequently spoke enthusiastically of the traits of not only his mother and sibling, but also an aunty, a cousin and a grandparent (see section 8.5) reflecting the importance of family members who reside beyond the immediate family unit. Interestingly he did not mention his father with whom he had regular contact, this will be discussed further later in the chapter.

This role of extended family members, especially grandparents, uncles and aunts has been highlighted by Houghton (2008) as a crucial form of help to children where domestic violence is an issue. In this study they seemed to provide an additional sense of value and belonging for the children. The role of grandparents was apparent in the lives of many of the children usually as someone who the child enjoyed seeing, who provided gifts and treats and generally made them feel special and valued. However, for one of the children it was the lack of desired contact with his grandparent that was apparent (see section 9.1.2).

South Asian children in Mullender et al's study (2002) provided the most extensive accounts of ongoing wider family support. The current study which only had one South Asian participant was consistent with these findings. For two of the participants in the current study, who had fled their family homes, disrupted relationships included siblings, fathers, pets and friends. The extended family can provide a possible way to alleviate some of the impacts of poverty on single-parent children, for example, by buying gifts the parent cannot afford, or giving children opportunities to talk (Walker et al., 2008).

10.1.1 Mothers

All five of the children in the current study lived in single-parent families with their mothers, so it was not surprising that most of the children took photographs of their mothers. For all the children their mothers were seen as the main source of support which reflects other findings (Mullender et al., 2002; McGee, 2000). Despite the multiple roles of mothers, they did not seem to hold special status in the children's lives, seemingly being taken for granted by the children. Findings in Walker et al's study (2008) found that younger children of single-parent families reflected the value of their relationship with their mothers through describing everyday tasks. They attributed this to the need for the children to ensure that their lives had routines and therefore stability. This could be true of the children in the current study, whose mothers represented stability and security especially when considering the potential unpredictability and impact of the domestic violence experienced. For some children, who have experienced domestic violence mothers are likely to be the only consistent feature in their lives, this was more obviously the case for those children who had fled and were living in a refuge.

One of the children in this study had the added complexity of having recently spent a period of about two years as a looked after child moving between residential placements. The decision to remove him from his mother's care suggested that she was unable to meet his needs or keep him safe. It may be that he was subjected to abuse at the hands of his mother as reflected in previous studies (see section 3.4.1). He may feel that his mother let him down. Despite such speculation it is clear that the lives of children who have experienced domestic violence are complex and often littered with many other interrelated adversities

which may affect their ability to trust in others, including their mothers and family members.

10.1.2 Children's Roles in the Family

Listening to children's perspectives about their lives and relationships has the potential to challenge previous assumptions about children's roles and the roles of others within families (Ridge, 2007). Research findings have highlighted the interdependency of children's lives with that of their parent and that some children feel responsible for providing their parent with emotional help and support (Walker et al., 2008). This was definitely the case for William who seemed aware of his mother's fragile emotional and/or physical wellbeing. It was clear that his mother had discussed her ailments and worries with him, as he told the researcher that his mother *"ached all over"* and often referred to her attending medical appointments. Evidence suggests that children who have experienced domestic violence will try to protect their mothers from knowing how unhappy they are (Mullender et al., 2002). It may be that his knowledge of his mother's potential fragility motivated William to adopt strategies to help his mother cope, such as:

- his patience and understanding that the needs of his younger sibling came before him,
- the requirement for him to be independent in his approach to school, homework, self care routines and occupying his time in the refuge by playing with other children,
- and fulfilling expectations to do well in school.

This behaviour suggests that William had a high level of perceived internal control, which was reflected in his social confidence, academic motivation and success. All of these represent protective factors. Evidence suggests that children with higher internal locus of control show less decline in functioning in response to adversity (Luthar, 1991).

The extraordinary resourcefulness of children who have experienced domestic violence has been previously recognised (Mullender et al., 2002; McGee, 2000; Jaffe et al., 1990). Ridge's (2007) exploration of children's experiences and perceptions of living in low-income, lone-mother households found that the children were engaged in a complex range of caring and coping strategies aimed

at easing some of the family pressures and tensions. These were largely concealed, often went overlooked and included: assuming extra responsibilities, moderating and policing their own needs, and accepting and tolerating adverse situations.

In the current study examples of children adopting caring and coping strategies to ease pressures and tensions included Ben who seemed to have taken on a role to protect himself and his mother from future anticipated violence. For the children residing in refuges the lack of personal space, sleeping arrangements and having limited possessions required further acceptance (see Appendix F), although one could question whether children in such positions could do anything other than tolerate, accept and survive.

10.1.3 Gender Issues

The tendency to identify more readily with the same sex parent was obviously more problematic for the three boys in the current study as they all lived in single-mother households. The children's lives seemed largely dominated by adult females: all the teachers mentioned were female, there was a female social worker and a female key worker, and all the people who work in the refuges were female. This does lend careful consideration about where boys who have experienced domestic violence usually at the hands of men, access male models who are non-controlling and non-violent.

Despite Ben's increasingly polite and friendly interactions the implication that he may inevitably, perceive relationships as unequal, usually falling in favour of the male, was reflected through the language he used and some of his domineering and manipulative comments directed at the researcher and his mother. Such behaviour can suggest motivation to control and dominate another person, which is the central feature of feminist theories of domestic violence. His aspirations were to be a wrestler or a gangster, and his choice of role models were focused on violence and the use of weapons which reflect his desire for protection. All his role models were fictional, from films, games or wrestling. This could relate to the lack of appropriate males with whom he could identify with, indicated in discussions of his small and disparate family and limited social network. The danger of not having appropriate and available male role models may lead to boys being more

likely to identify with their aggressive father figure, or with male models offered elsewhere for instance, within gangs or via the media.

10.1.4 What about Fathers?

Some of the children in this study recalled fond and happy memories of time spent with their fathers (see section 9.1.5). The relationship between children who experience domestic violence and their parents can be very complicated and children may feel torn and caught in the middle of their parents (Buckley et al., 2007). The omission of fathers from all the children's photographs and much of their conversation was an interesting area in the current study especially where children had ongoing contact with their father.

For the children in this study there seemed to be some confusion surrounding their thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards their fathers. Previous studies have found that the strongest emotion children reported with regards to fathers, was fear (Morrison, 2009; Mullender et al., 2002; McGee, 2000) - this did not emerge in the current study. However, it must be considered that the children were not asked about their fathers and only information which they wanted to share with the researcher was collected. It may have been that they had not wanted to discuss, or admit to being scared of their fathers. In the current study because the focus was not on the domestic violence and the sessions were child-centred, the possibilities for the children to talk openly about their fathers was more available (only one of the children did not mention a father-figure) as they were not expected to talk about them within a broader research agenda of exploring the domestic violence. Mullender et al (2002) found that only a minority of children spoke directly about their father-figures as distinct from the violence.

The confusion and stigma associated with domestic violence coupled with a child's limited ability to make sense of the interactions, violence and power struggles present in abusive adult relationships may make it very difficult for children to know how to respond and feel towards their fathers. The element of choice around these omissions seemed complex. For one child, he had been explicitly told not to talk about *"him"* which had an obvious impact on what he shared with the researcher. This represented an imposed attitude about the child's father

which stemmed from the experiences and attitudes of the child's mother, which are likely to be very different to those of the child (Gorin, 2004).

For two of the other children who had contact with their fathers the reasons they had not taken photographs to share was unclear. It seemed like a personal choice. It was particularly interesting that Harry, who talked openly about his father in a manner that suggested fondness: referring to him as being *"number one"* failed to include a photograph of him in his photo-book. It may be that the children felt a sense of implicit loyalty and respect towards their mother that overrode any desire they had to include photographs of fathers in their photo-books or had learned to 'say' the right things. These implicit feelings to protect their mother's emotional wellbeing may mean that they did not want to upset or hurt her (Mullender et al., 2002) and represent a caring role from the child.

Alternatively it may be that the children's feelings towards their fathers were that he was not an important, interesting or special feature of their lives and thus did not deserve to be in their photo-books. This was supported by David's comment that his father was *"a normal dad"*. For William who recalled many apparently happy memories of times spent with his father it appeared that there was a conflict of positive and negative feelings about him. Previous research has suggested that children either choose to see their fathers as bad or find ways of excusing or reframing his abusive behaviour (Peled, 1998). This was reflected in Harry's conversation about his father which included the following: *"he's good but he actually smokes"* (see section 9.1.3). It seemed as though Harry needed to offer something negative about his father to balance the positive statement. It may be that the idea that he was entirely good did not sit comfortably, but that smoking was a negative aspect of his father that did not need further clarification.

A recent exploratory study using participatory methods to enable children to express their feelings about their fathers in Scotland (Morrison, 2009) used a small group of children (aged eight to 14) to focus on children's perspectives of contact with fathers who perpetrated domestic violence. Children reported a mix of conflicting and, at times extreme feelings towards their fathers, these included: feeling sad about their fathers' violence, missing them, feeling angry with them and being relieved that they no longer lived with them. The children's feelings of loss related to their fathers seemed to be concerned with an ideal conception of what a

father should or could be like, rather than their own lived experience of their fathers (Morrison, 2009). This may have been reflected in the current study through the desire for their fathers to be *"normal"*, *"good"*, and *"number one"*: language which may not have reflected the reality of these men.

For two of the children who were less willing to talk about their fathers during the sessions, their reluctance seemed to reduce during the participant observation outings. During these sessions out of the home environment (where their mother was) both children engaged in spontaneous conversation and recollections about their fathers. This indicated that they did want to talk about their fathers but perhaps felt that it would be inappropriate to do so in close proximity to their mothers. It could also be that the children did not entirely trust the confidentiality assured about the use of the voice recordings.

Sometimes decisions with regards to children having contact with fathers following domestic violence are made without taking into consideration the child's views and opinions. Children may feel uncomfortable seeing their father but too frightened that he may become violent towards them, or their mother to refuse. Alternatively the children may want to have contact with their father despite their mother being adamant that they cannot. Due to the methodology employed in the current study, such detail was unknown so it is important to consider previous research in this area. In Buckley et al's study (2007) of children's experiences of domestic violence in the Republic of Ireland, the researchers found that some children enjoyed contact with their fathers post-separation, while others preferred to opt out, or felt a sense of anxiety about their father's welfare (Buckley et al., 2007). They identified post-separation contact as an area requiring intervention to ensure that children have more of a say in the nature and frequency of contact, and to try and ensure a reasonable quality of contact by promoting healthier father-child relationships (Buckley et al., 2007).

There is little research on the relationship between perpetrators (specifically fathers) and their children (Worrall et al., 2008; Featherstone and Peckover, 2007) but there is some evidence that boys particularly, may be damaged by negative early relationships with their fathers, often blaming their mother for loss of contact and identifying with their father's abusive behaviour (Stover et al., 2006). The potential devastating impact of these factors on a child's ability to be emotionally

healthy and develop appropriate relationships is huge. Further research is required in this area.

10.2 Social Networks

Relationships with friends were important, interesting and significant for all children. This is not really surprising as friendships with peers have long been identified as being important to children for a variety of reasons including the growth and development of social skills, play and security, as well as learning how to understand and accept others (Ridge, 2003; Thompson et al., 2001). Importantly friends have been found to be the most likely people that children tell about domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2002) and play a crucial role in supporting children in these situations. All of the participants talked about friends, with three identifying best friends.

The important role of friends was reflected by seemingly high levels of self-esteem and positive social perception of themselves for both William and Harry who appeared to have many friends. William not only seemed confident in his ability to quickly make lots of new friends in a new school, but also felt assured that he could consider one of the workers in the refuge as a friend (see section 10.4). At the heart of the modern ideal of friendship is the notion of trust: *"without trust friendships will fail"* (Pahl, 2000, p. 63). William's consideration that one of the refuge workers was a friend perhaps reflects this notion that he felt he could trust her. Harry also seemed confident in his friends as playmates and as companions for his approaching birthday party (see section 10.1). Unusually for a child of his age, David's two best friends were not the same gender as him. It was clear that the role of friends for him appeared to serve a protective and caring function to ensure his social inclusion. David identified that his friends *"played nice"* and *"stick by my side"* (see section 8.6) suggesting that where he could not rely on other children to do so, he could rely on his *"oldest"* and *"best"* friends.

The ability to make friends and develop social networks is considered a protective factor within resilience theory. The speed with which William made friends and the value that he placed on friendships with other children residing in the refuge may be due to an implicitly assumed commonality of experiences. Previous research suggests that friendships and the support of other children within refuges was a

much appreciated factor (Stafford et al., 2007; Mullender et al., 2002). Many children who reside in refuges report new and quickly formed bonds with other children of the same age with similar experiences. For many children it is a relief to have the experience of domestic violence in common with others, so that there is no stigma attached, and they no longer feel alone (Houghton, 2008).

It is not just extended family and peers who can be important in supporting children, but also family friends or adult friends, although this can depend on the extent of their wider knowledge of the domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2002). Liam chose to place his adult friend before his mother in his photo-book, which seemed to reflect the relatively high value he attached to his adult friend. When asked to explain this seemingly unconventional friendship he suggested that it was his friend's consistent presence and involvement in some difficult times that had led to such high status. On a number of occasions when the researcher visited the home, it was this adult friend who was with Liam as his mother had gone out. It was clear that this friend provided a source of support to both mother and child and was perceived as a trustworthy and reliable adult.

Much previous research suggests that children who have experienced domestic violence are likely to experience isolation and bullying (Local Government Association, 2006). Social learning theory would purport that this is because children learn through experiences of domestic violence that difficulties in relationships are resolved through methods of exerting power and control, and using threats and violence. Through developing poor social empathy and limited social problem solving, it can mean that they can fail to develop balanced, reciprocal relationships with their peers (Howe, 2005). This could lead to some children becoming either a victim or the aggressor in situations where they are struggling to engage in appropriate social behaviour (Cunningham and Baker, 2004). Also children can often feel they are to blame for the domestic violence and this diminishes their self-esteem and makes it difficult for them to develop positive relationships (Local Government Association, 2006).

Both Liam and Ben appeared somewhat more socially isolated than the other participants. The friendships they discussed with the researcher seemed unconventional. As discussed above Liam identified an adult as a special person and a friend, and Ben was friends with a toddler living in the refuge. It could be

that these friendships required a lower investment of emotional energy and resources than friendships with similarly aged peers, due to a shared sense of understanding around family circumstances and history.

10.3 Barriers to Communication

In the current study the importance of developing rapport with the children alongside a session outside their home environment helped to decrease feelings of anxiety whilst increasing the children's willingness to talk openly. However, various communication strategies were employed by the children to enable them to remain in control of conversations and protect themselves from anticipated powerlessness. These findings seemed to support evidence which suggests that some children who find it harder to talk will adopt coping strategies such as avoidance, distraction and escapism (Buckley et al., 2007). Examples of this may include Ben's fantastical language and scenarios (for example, cutting off his teacher's head, see section 9.2.1) which may represent his overwhelming feeling of powerlessness in his life leading to *"fantasies of revenge"* (McGee, 2000, p. 77).

Research indicates that secretiveness about family problems is a fairly universal characteristic of children (Alexander et al., 2005). Mullender et al (2002) found that almost half of the children interviewed did not talk to their mothers or siblings when domestic violence was occurring despite them being identified as the most supportive people in their lives. It is important to acknowledge that children are likely to know more than adults are aware (Stafford et al., 2007) and thus should be given adequate opportunities to explore their thoughts, feelings and emotions with others, in their own time and their own manner. It is important to recognise the communication strategies employed, the issues of secretiveness and the need to be respectful of children and their perceptions of the things that they do, or do not want to share with those around them. This is especially true from a professional perspective to be aware as an educational psychologist that there may be alternative reasons for a child to be employing such strategies that may be serving an adequate protective function. One such instance is that Ben's behaviour and interactions when out of the refuge were much calmer and more appropriate than had been expected. This made the researcher reflect on whether having the sessions in the refuge may have affected his behaviour and interactions.

more childlike Ben appeared. It was as though he had relaxed and trust had been established.

10.4 A Child's Environment and Culture

The network of family (and friends) surrounding a child shapes the environment they live in, including the attitudes and beliefs of those around them – the culture. It is within this culture that the value of childhood is set, which can act as a protective and nurturing force that promotes the innocence of childhood and ensures fun, child-focused experiences. In the current study a child-focused, protective family culture was apparent in the lives of three of the children. For these children events such as birthdays and Christmas were celebrated and the magic and wonder of being a child seemed to be encouraged by those people that surrounded them. Such a culture represents a significant protective factor for children and provides opportunities for them to feel valued and special. The promotion of childhood innocence and a belief in magic may also function as a protective factor against adversity as it enables a child to consider alternative possibilities and futures, and to have hope that things can get better.

As this study explored the perceptions of children who have experienced domestic violence it is important to consider the role of violence for these children. Confusing messages about the normality and acceptability of aggression and violence surrounded some of the children's lives and represented a culture that was perhaps not so protective and nurturing. For some of the children this meant that there were blurred boundaries between real violence, play and fantasy. Although this was not a commonly occurring theme in the current study, evidence suggests that males in particular have a potential for learning violent behaviour, and that it is the environment that can make the difference by either encouraging or discouraging such behaviour (Miedzian, 2002, 1995).

For some of the children in this study there seemed to be a sense of a culture of violence at home, for example the presence of play fighting (see section 9.5.1). Play fighting is considered an important stage of development for children and functions as an enjoyable activity that helps to maintain friendships and develop emotional control (Smith et al., 2004). However, adults should be taking the lead

to clarify and reinforce boundaries through their behaviour and in their responses to the children, at home, in school and more generally in society.

> *Many young people (and their parents) are frightened that living with violence marks them out as inevitably bound for a violent future themselves. It is important to dispel such myths, while also providing positive opportunities for parents to learn to discipline in non-violent ways and for young people to learn at home and at school that violence is wrong and is not appropriate as a means of conflict resolution (Humphreys and Mullender, 2000, p. 17).*

10.4.1 The Role of the Media

Within our technologically advanced, increasingly digital world that children readily access, symbolic modelling is constantly provided by the mass media (Bandura, 1973). The culture of violence including the multiple and increasingly interactive media sources available, teaches children that violence is acceptable (Miedzian, 1995) and commonplace. The idea that the media provides this source of violence is not new, neither is the suggestion that increased exposure can lead to emotional desensitisation and increased levels of aggression in some viewers (Widom, 1989).

> *Children are frequent witnesses of violence: they watch it, hear it, read about it, and play with it (Peled et al., 1995, p. 3).*

Ben continually referred to media sources of violence, including films and computer games. These media influences seemed to pervade all aspects of his life including his play: *"sometimes we play Hellboy and Terminator"*. Interestingly both these films he referred are classified by the British Board of Film Classification as being suitable for children of at least 12 years of age. Ben, not 12 at the time of the study also had detailed knowledge of other films that had classifications of 12, 15 and 18 years. This raises concern about adherence to the censorship of media for the most vulnerable children.

Such concerns are currently being considered by the UK Government in order to better understand the risks and potential impacts of the increasingly accessible range of media marketed at children. The Children's Plan (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007) acknowledges the need to reduce risks associated with media and the commercial world. A recently published report, 'Safer Children in a Digital World' (Byron, 2008) suggested that children's

individual strengths and vulnerabilities need to be taken into account before being able to consider whether exposure to violent media might be potentially harmful for a child. The current study has highlighted that for some children who have experienced domestic violence, especially those who have limited social networks and few positive male role models, the impact of violent media could possibly have further detrimental effects on their wellbeing and ability to develop into sociable and happy young people. However, the potentially huge benefits of media and technology must not be disregarded as they offer an easily accessible source of fun, entertainment, knowledge, information and escapism for children. The media can open doors and offer alternative perspectives for children living in adverse situations.

10.5 The Impact of Experiences of Violence on Ben

Unfortunately the role of violence for all of the children in this study has been very real. For most of them it would seem that this is not impacting significantly on their ability to manage and cope with their daily lives with personal and social confidence, and success being common. The exception to this is Ben and the following section will explore his unique perspective on the world as the role of violence and its impact on his life was much more explicit and he seemed to find the boundaries of what is acceptable unclear and confusing.

Ben's interests in wrestling, violent computer games and films appear to reinforce his views surrounding violence and the use of weapons by normalising his perceptions of the world as a violent and unstable place. It was clear that real violence played a significant role in Ben's life. He told the researcher about being various aggressive incidents (see section 9.5.1). Ben needed to feel able to protect himself:

> If someone punched me I'd go bang, bang, bang [actions] ... 'cos what you do is you punch back sideways and when I block him you go for the middle. Like you go bang bang bang bang [demonstrating] bang and then bang kick elbow punch punch kick punch punch punch and carry on punching.

Of particular concern was his *"carry on punching"* assertion, implying that he may not know when or how to stop an aggressive act. Cunningham and Baker (2007) suggest that as a result of experiencing domestic violence a child makes one of only two possible choices: to be the aggressor or to be the victim. It is quite clear

from the data that Ben had chosen to be the aggressor. This is reflected through his aggressive use of language, his body language and behaviour, and comments such as, *"I am going to teach you but I am going to beat you up"*.

Ben's interest in weapons is likely to stem from the unpredictability and dangers he perceives as continuing to be present in his life despite no longer living within an abusive environment. This sense of threat is likely to have stemmed from his experiences of domestic violence and the ability of others to inflict fear and distress. Ben appears to have responded to this threat of victimisation with a need to protect himself, and also his mother, through the use of violence and weapons.

Other studies have suggested that children who have experienced domestic violence can be highly reactive to subsequent expressions of anger and increased psychological distress (Henning et al., 1997). For these children, when they are faced with a situation where there is conflict, aggression or upset they can become excited or aroused, and loose their ability to regulate emotions. Howe (2005) suggests that children can become hyper-aroused and emotionally deregulated when under stress and are at risk of developing externalising problems, this may mean that they subsequently loose control and become angry or aggressive. During the initial sessions with Ben, his behaviour included pacing and rapid speech. It was not within the scope of the current study to assess his responses in relation to his experiences to establish whether they were extreme or played a protective function during times of extreme adversity, and enabled him to survive.

10.6 Consideration of Psychological Theory

This study has been shaped by many psychological theories and principles; four major psychological theories that have helped to shape the researcher's thinking were outlined in Chapter 5 and included:

- Attachment theory
- Social learning theory
- Resilience theory
- Feminist theory

Although elements of these theories have been weaved throughout this chapter it is important to clarify using examples from this study the evidence that supports and refutes these theories.

10.6.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory outlines how the early attachment relationship provides the psychological underpinning for transition through childhood and into adulthood. In the current study this was demonstrated by the readiness of the children to explore their world and was most obvious in the case of William. He perceived others as predictable and trustworthy and invested in relationships which he appeared to consider as both worthwhile and rewarding. This could be suggestive of a secure attachment relationship with his mother; however a limitation of this study would include not knowing any contextual information about the children's early experiences to allow further elaboration about how attachments have impacted upon their responses to domestic violence and the way that they perceive and understand their world.

Since infants show a preference for one caretaker at the start of life (usually the mother) this person can be described as a child's first friend (Thompson et al., 2001). This *"first friendship becomes a template for future human connections"* (Thompson et al., 2001, p. 15). This is important when considering the relationship the children in the current study had with their mothers and their subsequent social networks. Both Ben and Liam appeared to have more complex relationships with their mothers as well as limited social networks, compared with the other three children who appeared to have warmer mother-child bonds and stronger peer networks. Although no further generalisations or connections can be assumed due to the lack of contextual information this is an interesting notion to consider when considering that both attachment relationships and social networks can play a protective role in situations of adversity.

10.6.2 Social Learning Theory

As already highlighted in Chapter 5 research which utilises Bandura's social learning theory of aggression (1977, 1973) has suggested that children growing up with domestic violence are more likely to become perpetrators or victims than other children as they will potentially learn destructive conflict resolution and communication patterns (Murrell et al., 2007). Most of the children in the study demonstrated the presence of appropriate self-regulation of their behaviour and resultant successful relationships. For some of the children violence did not

appear to feature in their lives currently. For Ben it was clear that his experiences had impacted on his perspectives and interpretation of his environment and the people in it. However, it cannot be assumed that this is solely due to exposure to domestic violence; it is likely that a combination of adversities have affected him.

What was more obvious was that the presence of positive modelling of attitudes, behaviour and beliefs from mothers, wider family members and friends was more pertinent for the children in this study than the negative notion of a 'cycle of violence', examples include some of the children's positive attitudes towards friends, play, school success and future aspirations.

10.6.3 Resilience Theory

The framework provided by resilience theory has been useful to understand the complex, risk and protective factors present in children's lives. These included the importance of networks of family and friends which seemed to buffer self-esteem, promote social competence and in some cases enable the children to continue to enjoy the innocence of childhood and protect them from social exclusion.

This theory seems to offer the most useful framework to make sense of the findings and to allow for careful consideration of the uniqueness of each child. All of the participants are considered at risk due to their experiences of domestic violence. However, most did not display any significant problems or impacts, reflecting the so called *"ordinariness"* (Buckley et al., 2007, p. 308) of resilience processes. From developing a deeper understanding of each of the children the researcher was able to consider how different protective or compensatory factors could have supported this buffering of adversity: for example, individual traits such as personality were clear in Harry's humour and William's friendliness, and interpersonal factors such as the supportive role of family and friends was accompanied by sense of being valued. Positive outcomes for the children included academic success, positive social networks, confidence and high aspirations for the future. For William, his pride in his personal academic ability as well as the value he placed on school represented a protective factor. This alongside his friendly nature, high self-esteem and social confidence are indicative of factors that have enabled him to cope with the adversity experienced.

Within resilience theory factors such as social competence, having lots of friends and having perceived efficacy valued by themselves or others are all considered compensatory or protective factors. Thus school can provide an important opportunity to build resilience, both academically and socially (Ridge, 2003). In terms of supporting children who have experienced, or are experiencing domestic violence, careful consideration of their needs within a resiliency framework could offer insight into their individual circumstances and their potential capacity to cope with adversity. The process of exploring the factors outlined below would enable a clear picture of the protective factors the child already has that need to be nurtured and promoted, the skills they need to be taught and any gaps that need to be filled by appropriate support and intervention. These factors include;

- the child's social skills, relationships and networks of friends and family,
- their academic ability, engagement with learning and aspirations,
- their language and communication skills including their emotional literacy,
- their sense of belonging and identity,
- their home situation and position in the local community,
- their physical and health status,
- and their ability to problem solve.

10.6.4 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory offered an interesting framework to consider the findings where power and control were central notions. It enabled the researcher to consider the findings with consideration of the deeper patriarchal inequalities and attitudes towards women in society which are reinforced in situations of domestic violence. Examples of this could be assumed from perceptions of some of the children that women were in need of protection, and in one cases not entitled to respect. Although feminist theory provided a valuable historical context for this study, a detailed examination of its implications for the findings was not explored due to the inclusivity and individual nature of the data collected.

Summary

This chapter has placed the findings from the current study within a wider context of research. The children in this study were active social agents who despite their vulnerability as a consequence of the domestic violence experienced employed

pertinent strategies within their families to support their mothers to cope. At times this was reflected through their desire to control relationships and situations.

Wider networks of family and friends were important to buffer children's self-esteem, social competence and to protect the innocence of their childhood where valued. Children's ability to understand and communicate their feelings with regards to themselves, their relationships and particularly their fathers was particularly complex. The need for children who have experienced domestic violence to have non-violent male role models was highlighted as well as the inappropriateness of certain easily accessible media. The need for this to be adequately monitored and controlled alongside the commercial world's responsibility for the potential impacts of their products must be considered for the emotional and social wellbeing of the future generation. The use of a resiliency framework to explore children's individual circumstances is highlighted as a useful approach to tailor support in order to improve their capacity to cope with adversity, such as domestic violence.

Chapter 11 - Conclusion and Implications

Domestic violence is a serious social problem and violates a number of children's rights (see Unicef, 2008). In current UK safeguarding legislation domestic violence is considered a serious cause of vulnerability for children which has the potential to inhibit children's ability to achieve the ambitions outlined in ECM (Department for Education and Skills, 2004).

It is clearly documented both in policy and research that children in families where there is domestic violence should have their voices heard. They should be listened to, be taken seriously and involved in decisions (Local Government Association, 2006; Mullender et al., 2002; McGee, 2000). This study aimed to examine how children who have experienced domestic violence perceive and understand their lives. It utilised a child-friendly approach where each child was respected and consideration was given to their personal abilities, interests and concerns to ensure that their voices were heard.

Contributions to knowledge are reflected through the methodology employed and the combination of data collection methods used, which meant that the children were given the time and space, to share the things of interest and importance to them. Taking photographs presented the children with a challenge: to think about and prepare the images they wanted to capture, share and save. At times, this meant dealing with falsely anticipated expectations (see Appendix E). The fun, flexible and responsive interaction between adult and child (researcher and participant) enabled the sessions to be enjoyable as well as fruitful. The flexibility of the sessions meant that power and control remained balanced and where possible in the hands of the child. This was important to make the research process valid as a child-centred study, and to provide a rich and powerful illustration of their perceptions and views. The benefit of the rapport which developed between researcher and child was reflected in their increasing inclination to discuss issues and their openness.

The children's voices reflected their individuality and unique experiences even for two of the children who were siblings, their perceptions of what was important, interesting and special, and the issues of significance were very different. The

importance of being able to access the perceptions of each child was due to an approach based on respect for them as individual actors in their own worlds.

> *Much as policy-makers and practitioners might wish it were otherwise, there is no simple, single story we can tell about living with domestic violence and each child must be given the respect and space to tell their own story and to explore their personal issues, conflicts and questions (Mullender et al., 2002, p. 114).*

Through exploration of chosen psychological theories, resilience theory appeared to be the most useful to understand the findings in the study. Protective or compensatory factors apparent for the children included family, especially siblings, friends and school. Although the uncertainty, loss and change created by domestic violence had varying degrees of impact and significance to each child, they demonstrated remarkable adaptability, tolerance and a range of coping strategies. These included:

- William's remarkable positive and confident approach to both his new living circumstances in refuge and his new school.
- Liam's pragmatic response to limited financial resources that required him to occasionally use a kettle to heat water.
- Harry's fun approach to situations and his desire to make others laugh.

The complexities surrounding domestic violence and in particular the children's ability to understand, make sense of and communicate their feelings with regards to themselves and their relationships emerged in this study. These complexities related to features unique to the individual child which could include: confusion with regards to their understanding of the past, current and future situation, their desire to protect themselves and others from anticipated powerlessness, or their understanding of the boundaries of acceptability with regards to aggressive behaviour and violence. Other complexities were related to those imposed upon the children by the experience of the domestic violence itself (such as fleeing the situation to remain safe) or by the attitudes and beliefs of those close to them (such as being told they cannot talk about *"him"*).

All children are active decision makers with sophisticated understandings of their own situations, strategies for coping as well as views and opinions (Stafford et al., 2007). They are influenced by their experiences and respond in unique ways. In conclusion all children, especially those who have experienced domestic violence,

who are vulnerable for increased risk of negative impacts, should be listened to in ways that are meaningful and respectful so that support, can be responsive and beneficial.

Implications

The following outlines some of the many implications of this study for those working with children, including educational psychologists.

All children need time and space to communicate in a manner respectful to them as individuals. Children who have experienced domestic violence may find communicating their perspectives, concerns and views difficult so it is important that alternative and creative methods are utilised as appropriate. Evidence implies that children often do not have the language skills required to talk about domestic violence (McGee, 2000) so it is important that those working with children can utilise alternatives to enable the children to communicate meaningfully. Such alternatives relate to the relationship between adult and child, the methods of communication utilised, and the flexibility of arrangements, locations and timescales placed around children to enable them to communicate. Children need to be given the message that they are permitted to talk as well as assurances that they can retain control over the conversations and outcomes. Although difficult, parents and family members need to be encouraged to talk to their children about their experiences to support them to make sense of their feelings, and to ensure that blame and responsibility is not incorrectly attributed.

> *Families are the bedrock of society and the place for nurturing happy, capable and resilient children (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007, p. 6).*

There is a need for children who have experienced domestic violence to be able to talk about the perpetrator of the violence in a manner that is safe and respectful of their current situation and relationships. Most of the children in the current study wanted to talk about their fathers but not necessarily in close proximity to their mothers. The need to remove the cloak of invisibility, secrecy and shame of domestic violence is essential alongside early intervention, preventative work and a focus on raising awareness within the general population. Only then will the

children themselves, as well as their family, friends, teachers and communities feel better able to offer appropriate support and guidance.

There is also a need for a greater level of tolerance and flexibility from professionals working with children. It must be acknowledged that some presenting difficulties experienced in schools and settings, which are raised to the attention of support services such as educational psychologists may represent a child's response to experiences of domestic violence. It is in these cases that the perspectives and views of the child are essential, and best achieved through getting to know the child and gaining their trust.

The current study found that school was a place for children to belong, to seek support from both adults and peers, and to play. Schools have an important role within the lives of children who have experienced domestic violence. They can play an essential role in increasing the emotional literacy of all children to enable them to communicate their views and concerns. Also through a consistent approach and transparent, fair boundaries with regards to behaviour, children can develop clear guidelines for understanding the acceptability of aggression and violence beyond their homes. Such an ethos of respect, trust and honesty from both adults and children can restore faith in feeling secure and protected. Children need to know that they are not alone in their experiences of domestic violence, this can be achieved through whole school interventions, group work and where necessary, targeted individual work.

There needs to be a continuum of support for children, families, and communities as needs vary widely and support needs to reflect not only the individuality of a child's responses but also other contributory factors which include ethnicity, cultural, religious and community factors. These need to be understood and respected to truly help children and families to cope and move forward from domestic violence. At an individual level, there needs to be more specifically focused interventions available for children known to have experienced domestic violence, this could be best achieved through a multi-agency strategy, guidelines for which already exist (see Local Government Association, 2006) to prevent negative outcomes for children. Increasingly schools and other agencies have a role to support parents, families and communities. Such work can help to reduce social stigma associated with domestic violence.

The need for children who have experienced domestic violence to have access to non-violent male role models was recognised in the study as well as the inappropriateness of certain easily accessible media figures. 'Safety and Justice' the Government's proposal on domestic violence aims to use high profile male role models to communicate the message that domestic violence is unacceptable (Home Office, 2003). The Children's Plan (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007) highlights the need to engage with fathers more. Featherstone and Peckover (2007) describe the disappearance of domestically violent fathers as a *"curious phenomenon"* (Featherstone and Peckover, 2007, p. 198) mirrored in policy discourses and everyday practices. They argue that this is not supporting or improving possibilities for abused women and children and that it is crucial that such men are engaged with, as part of better support for all concerned.

Recommendations for Practice

This study aimed to enhance the understanding of the strategies that children use to cope, and the people or things from which they find support, comfort, strength and understanding. Specific recommendations related to the practice of educational psychologists include:

- Working in a joined-up manner with key agencies to identify children at risk of negative outcomes as a result of experiences of domestic violence.
- Ensuring that vulnerable children are known to support services so that appropriate support can be offered, if necessary, as early as possible to prevent negative outcomes.
- Promoting awareness of the needs of children who have experienced domestic violence at all levels within Children's Services. This should encompass systemic work around issues such as training, research and evaluation of intervention programmes.
- Promoting practice and procedures in organisations and settings that are beneficial to children and their families who have experienced domestic violence. For example, supporting schools, education and youth settings to respond appropriately to disclosures from children or parents, to offer a range of flexible support such as group work programmes, opportunities to talk to an adult, and peer mentoring. Working through a resiliency framework would ensure that protective factors are nurtured and promoted in ways that could

include celebrating and sharing successes, and supporting children to make and maintain friendships.

- Ensuring that children's voices are heard in issues related to domestic violence. This could be achieved by involving them in research, information gathering and evaluations to gain a better understanding of their views and concerns.
- Ensuring that all work where children's views are sought enables them to communicate in a manner appropriate to their needs and capabilities. For example, by using a range of creative communicative tools such as photographs, play, drawing, and role play.
- Raising awareness and advising parents of the potentially damaging effects of excessive exposure to violent media for vulnerable children.
- Promoting the benefits of alternative activities that enable children to be successful, create social networks and have access to positive, non-violent role models. Examples of such activities are sports, art, and music clubs.

Limitations of the Study

Reflections on some of the study's limitations have already been mentioned (see section 6.9). This section aims to highlight and clarify the main limitations.

The primary limitation of qualitative research is that as a consequence of the small number of participants involved results cannot be generalised to a wider population. However, the value of this research is that it provides an in-depth exploration of children's experiences to help identify and explore issues that are important to them and that affect their everyday lives.

Another possible limitation is the lack of contextual information collected that may have offered an insight into reasons for some of the children's perceptions and views. The researcher maintained the belief that by ensuring that the children were respected and valued as active participants in their lives, the quality and detail of the information gained would be better. The children's perspectives and voices remained the focus of the study, rather than those of their parents who may have provided information to bias the researcher-participant relationship. The approach enabled the researcher to get to know each child at face value and to interpret their views and perspectives without additional, alternative adult points of

view. The researcher experienced the children's worlds in the way that they chose to share it. Although it may have been interesting to have collected details from the children's mothers about the nature, severity and timing of the domestic violence experienced, and the child's involvement and responses to it, this would have undermined the child-centred approach and respect for them as actors in their own lives. Such information would not have helped to address the research aims.

Practical limitations were that the children were not all skilled at taking photographs. Not all the children took a whole quota of photographs and some of the photographs were bad quality due to poor use of the flash and over-exposure to light. Additionally the timing of the study meant that some of the children had the cameras during school holidays, which was not ideal as they had limited access to their peers.

In terms of utilising IPA to analyse the data the researcher was required to interpret the children's experiences, through a sustained relationship with the data - which consisted of children's language. The age and capacity of the individuals may have affected their ability to explain both accurately and coherently their thoughts and feelings. Although measures such as the use of photographs were included to counteract this potential limitation, it may be that using an older sample of children would have improved the quality of the data collected.

Possibilities for Further Research

Although there is much research about children who have experienced domestic violence and increasingly this is interested in their perspectives, this study illustrates the benefits of such research being more longitudinal in approach; as it enables the development of rapport which inclines the child to talk more openly about the issues that concern them. Similarly, the value of research that is child-friendly in terms of its pace, language and content is acknowledged. It is this which will provide data that is rich and complex. Utilising methods such as observation, participant generated photographs and other creative methods of data collection will enable the children to express themselves in ways not reliant on their verbal capabilities. In particular, participant observation where sessions occurred out of the home environment seemed to offer some of the children their

best opportunity to talk freely. On reflection this methodological approach seemed to have more potential that initially thought, and future research with children who have experienced domestic violence would benefit greatly from using participant observation. It seemed to present a less threatening and more natural context for the children allowing them to be themselves and to communicate openly with the researcher who gained great insight into their perspectives.

Future research needs to encompass a wider population to enable a thorough exploration of perspectives of children who have experienced domestic violence with consideration of the influence of factors including age, gender, and cultural and ethnic background. Such research would require access to a range of researchers which ideally would include men and those from a range of backgrounds.

As already mentioned there is a need for research that focuses on the complex relationships between perpetrators (usually fathers) and children. This is required to enable support and intervention to be targeted at improving the understanding of perpetrators about the potentially devastating impacts of domestic violence, and to help to reconcile children with their fathers where appropriate, with the aim of developing positive and healthy future relationships. Future research into the complexities of domestic violence would benefit from exploring the perspectives of perpetrators in relation to their perceived role in the lives of their children. This would provide valuable information into how to educate and change outcomes for perpetrators and their children to enable more positive futures. Research into the vulnerabilities of boys and young men, some of whom resort to violence, also represents an area for future research and development.

References

Abrahams, H. (2004). *A Long Hard Road To Go By: A Study Of The Support Work Carried Out In Women's Aid Refuges.* Unpublished Ph.D, University of Bristol.

Adams, C. M. (2006). The Consequences of Witnessing Family Violence on Children and Implications for Family Counsellors. *The Family Journal, 14*(4), 334-341.

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1998). Observational Techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London Sage.

Alderson, P. (1995). *Listening to Children: Children, Ethics and Social Research.* Barkingside: Barnardos.

Allwood, M. A., & Bell, D. J. (2008). A preliminary examination of emotional and cognitive mediators in the relations between violence exposure and violent behaviors in youth. *Journal of Community Psychology, 36*(8), 989-1007.

Bandura, A. (1973). Social Learning Theory of Aggression. In J. F. Knutson (Ed.), *The control of aggression: Implications from basic research*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. London Prentice-Hall.

Beaver, R. (1996). *Educational Psychology Casework: A Practice Guide*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Becker, F., & French, L. (2004). Making the links: child abuse, animal cruelty and domestic violence. *Child Abuse Review, 13*(6), 399-414.

Birbeck, D. J., & Drummond, M. J. N. (2007). Research with Young Children: Contemplating Methods and Ethics. *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 7*(2), 21-31.

Bolger, K. E., Patterson, C. J., & Kupersmidt, J. B. (1998). Peer Relationships and Self-Esteem among Children Who Have Been Maltreated. *Child Development, 69*(4), 1171-1197.

Boserman, C. (2009). Diaries from cannabis users: an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Health (London), 13*(4), 429-448.

Bowlby, J. (1953). *Child care and the growth of love*. London: Penguin Books.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss. Volume I: Attachment.* . London: Penguin Books.

Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss. Volume II. Separation: anxiety and anger.* . London: Penguin Books.

Bowlby, J. (1979). *The making & breaking of affectional bonds.* . London: Tavistock/Routledge.

Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss. Volume III. Loss, sadness and depression.* . London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: clinical applications of attachment theory*. London: Routledge.

Brandon, M., & Lewis, A. (1996). Significant harm and children's experiences of domestic violence. *Child & Family Social Work, 1*(1), 33-42.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101.

British Medical Association. (2007). Domestic Abuse. Retrieved 8th May, 2009, from http://www.bma.org.uk/images/Domestic%20Abuse_tcm41-183509.pdf

British Psychological Society. (2006). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. Leicester: BPS.

British Psychological Society. (2007). *Child Protection Portfolio*. Leicester: BPS.

Brownlie, J., Anderson, S., & Ormston, R. (2006). *Children as Researchers*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Report.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buckley, H., Holt, S., & Whelan, S. (2007). Listen to Me! Children's experiences of domestic violence. *Child Abuse Review, 16*(5), 296-310.

Buzan, T. (2009). Buzan World: Mind Maps. Retrieved 29th June, 2009, from www.buzanworld.com/Mind_Maps.htm

Byron, T. (2008). *Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review*. Nottingham: Department for Children, Schools and Families, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Carlson, B. E. (2000). Children Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence: Research Findings and Implications for Intervention. *Trauma Violence Abuse, 1*(4), 321-342.

Carrillo, R., Connor, M., Fried, S., Sandler, J., & Waldorf, L. (2003). *Not a Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women*. New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Clark-Ibanez, M. (2007). Inner-City Children in Sharper Focus. In G. C. Stanczak (Ed.), *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society and Representation*. London: Sage.

Cleaver, H., Nicholson, D., Tarr, S., & Cleaver, D. (2008). *Child Protection, Domestic Violence and Parental Substance Misuse: Family Experiences and Effective Practice*. Nottingham: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Cleaver, H., Unell, I., & Aldgate, J. (1999). *Children's needs – parenting capacity: the impact of parental illness, problem alcohol and drug use and domestic violence on children's development*. London: HMSO.

Clements, C. M., Oxtoby, C., & Ogle, R. L. (2008). Methodological Issues in Assessing Psychological Adjustment in Child Witnesses of Intimate Partner Violence. *Trauma Violence Abuse, 9*(2), 114-127.

Connors, C., & Stalker, K. (2002). *Children's Experiences of Disability: A Positive Outlook*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Education Department.

Coyle, A. (2007). Introduction to Qualitative Psychological Research. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology*. London: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2004). *What About Me! Seeking to Understand the Child's View of Violence in the Family*. Ontario: Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System.

Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2007). *Little Eyes, Little Ears: How Violence Against A Mother Shapes Children As They Grow*. Ontario: The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System.

Currie, C. L. (2006). Animal cruelty by children exposed to domestic violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*(4), 425-435.

Day, A., Chung, D., O'Leary, P., & Carson, E. (2009). Programs for Men who Perpetrate Domestic Violence: An Examination of the Issues Underlying the Effectiveness of Intervention Programs. *Journal of Family Violence, 24*(3), 203-212.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage.

Department for Children Schools and Families. (2007). *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*. Norwich: DCSF.

Department for Education and Skills. (2004). *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. Nottingham: DfES.

Department of Health. (2005). *Responding to Domestic Abuse: A Handbook for Health Professionals*. London: DoH.

Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills. (2004). *National service framework for children, young people and maternity services*. London: DoH and DfES.

Devaney, J. (2008). Chronic Child Abuse and Domestic Violence: Children and Families with Long-term and Complex Needs. *Child & Family Social Work, 13*, 443-453.

Dobash, R. E., & Dobash, R. P. (1979). *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy*. New York: The Free Press.

Dobash, R. P., & Dobash, R. E. (2004). Women's Violence to Men in Intimate Relationships: Working on a Puzzle. *British Journal of Criminology, 44*(3), 324-349.

Dodd, L. W. (2009). Therapeutic groupwork with young children and mothers who have experienced domestic abuse. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 25*(1), 21 - 36.

Domestic Abuse Intervention Programmes. (2008). The Power and Control Wheel. Retrieved 26th July, 2009, from www.theduluthmodel.org

Dong, M., Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Dube, S. R., Williamson, D. F., Thompson, T. J., et al. (2004). The interrelatedness of multiple forms of childhood abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 28*(7), 771-784.

Dutton, D. G. (2000). Witnessing Parental Violence as a Traumatic Experience Shaping the Abusive Personality. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, 3*(1), 59 - 67.

Dutton, D. G., & Corvo, K. (2006). Transforming a flawed policy: A call to revive psychology and science in domestic violence research and practice. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 11*(5), 457-483.

Dutton, D. G., & Nicholls, T. L. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—The conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 10*, 680–714.

Edleson, J. L. (1999). Children's Witnessing of Adult Domestic Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 14*(8), 839-869.

Edleson, J. L., Ellerton, A. L., Seagren, E. A., Kirchberg, S. L., Schmidt, S. O., & Ambrose, A. T. (2007). Assessing child exposure to adult domestic violence. *Children and Youth Services Review, 29*(7), 961-971.

El-Sheikh, M., Harger, J., & Whitson, S. M. (2001). Exposure to Interparental Conflict and Children's Adjustment and Physical Health: The Moderating Role of Vagal Tone. *Child Development, 72*(6), 1617-1636.

Fantuzzo, J. W., & Mohr, W. K. (1999). Prevalence and Effects of Child Exposure to Domestic Violence. *The Future of Children: Domestic Violence and Children 9*(3), 21-32.

Featherstone, B., & Peckover, S. (2007). Letting Them Get Away with It: Fathers, Domestic Violence and Child Welfare. *Critical Social Policy, 27*(2), 181-202.

Ferguson, D. M., & Horwood, L. J. (2003). Resilience to Childhood Adversity. In S. S. Luthar (Ed.), *Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities*. Cambridge: University Press.

Fergusson, D. M., & Horwood, L. J. (1998). Exposure to Interparental Violence in Childhood and Psychosocial Adjustment in Young Adulthood. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 22*(5), 339-357.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1998). Interviewing: The Art of Science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage.

Foster, P. (1996). Using Observation. In R. Sapsford & V. Jupp (Eds.), *Data Collection and Analysis*. London: Sage.

Fox, M., & Rendall, S. (2002). Ethical Issues for Educational Psychologists Engaged in Research. *Educational and Child Psychology, 19*(1), 61-70.

Frohmann, L. (2005). The Framing Safety Project: Photographs and Narratives by Battered Women. *Violence Against Women, 11*(11), 1396-1419.

George, M. (1994). Riding the Donkey Backwards: Men as the Unacceptable Victims of Marital Violence. *The Journal of Men's Studies, 3*(2), 137-159.

Gewirtz, A., & Edleson, J. (2007). Young Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence: Towards a Developmental Risk and Resilience Framework for Research and Intervention. *Journal of Family Violence, 22*(3), 151-163.

Goodenough, T., Williamson, E., Kent, J., & Ashcroft, R. (2003). 'What did you think about that?' Researching children's perceptions of participation in a longitudinal genetic epidemiological study. *Children & Society, 17*(2), 113-125.

Gorin, S. (2004). Understanding what children say about living with domestic violence, parental substance misuse or parental mental health problems - summary. Retrieved 16th January, 2008, from www.jrf.org.uk

Greene, S., & Hill, M. (2005). Researching Children's Experiences: Methods and Methodological Issues In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching Children's Experiences: Approaches and Methods.* London: Sage.

Grover, S. (2004). Why Won't They Listen to Us?: On Giving Power and Voice to Children Participating in Social Research. *Childhood, 11*(1), 81-93.

Hague, G., Mullender, A., Kelly, L., Malos, E., & Debbonaire, T. (2000). Unsung Innovation: the History of Work with Children in UK Domestic Violence Refuges. In J. Hanmer, C. Itzin, S. Quaid & D. Wigglesworth (Eds.), *Home Truths About Domestic Violence*. London: Routledge.

Hale, E., D, Treharne, G., J, & Kitas, G., D. (2008). Qualitative methodologies II: a brief guide to applying interpretative phenomenological analysis in musculoskeletal care. *Musculoskeletal Care, 6*(2), 86-96.

Hanmer, J. (1990). Men, power, and the exploitation of women. *Women's Studies International Forum, 13*(5), 443-456.

Harold, G. (2007). *Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence and their Psychological Development* (ESRC End of Award Report No. RES-000-22-1041). Swindon: ESRC.

Harold, G., & Howarth, E. (2004). How marital conflict and violence affects children: Theory, research and future directions. In G. T. Calder, G. Harold & E. Howarth

(Eds.), *Children living with domestic violence: Towards a framework for assessment and intervention*. Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing.

Harper, D. (1998). On the Authority of the Image: Visual Methods at the Crossroads. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage.

Henning, K., Leitenberg, H., Coffey, P., Bennett, T., & Jankowski, M. K. (1997). Long-term psychological adjustment to witnessing interparental physical conflict during childhood. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 21*(6), 501-515.

Herrenkohl, T. I., Sousa, C., Tajima, E. A., Herrenkohl, R. C., & Moylan, C. A. (2008). Intersection of Child Abuse and Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence. *Trauma Violence Abuse, 9*(2), 84-99.

Hester, M., Pearson, C., Harwin, N., & Abrahams, H. (2007). *Making an Impact: Children and Domestic Violence* Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Hill, J. (1996). Parental Psychiatric Disorder and the Attachment Relationship. In M. Gopfert, J. Webster & M. V. Seeman (Eds.), *Parental Psychiatric Disorder*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hill, M. (2005). Ethical Considerations in Researching Children's Experiences. In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching Children's Experiences: Approaches and Methods*. London: Sage.

Holden, G. W. (2003). Children Exposed to Domestic Violence and Child Abuse: Terminology and Taxonomy. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 6*(3), 151-160.

Holden, G. W., & Ritchie, K. L. (1991). Linking Extreme Marital Discord, Child Rearing, and Child Behavior Problems: Evidence from Battered Women. *Child Development, 62*(2), 311-327.

Holt, S., Buckley, H., & Whelan, S. (2008). The Impact of Exposure to Domestic Violence on Children and Young People: A Review of the Literature. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 32*, 797-810.

Home Office. (2003). *Safety and Justice: The Government's Proposals on Domestic Violence*. London: The Stationery Office.

Home Office. (2008). Crime Reduction: What is Domestic Violence? Retrieved 10th September 2008, from www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv01.htm

Houghton, C. (2008). Participation of Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse. In C. Humphreys, C. Houghton & J. Ellis (Eds.), *Literature Review: Better Outcomes for Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse: Directions for Good Practice*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

Howe, D. (2005). *Child Abuse and Neglect: Attachment, Development and Intervention.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Humphreys, C. (2007). Domestic Violence and Child Abuse. Retrieved 23rd December, 2008, from www.rip.org.uk

Humphreys, C., & Houghton, C. (2008). The Research Evidence on Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse. In C. Humphreys, C. Houghton & J. Ellis (Eds.), *Literature Review: Better Outcomes for Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse: Directions for Good Practice.* . Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

Humphreys, C., Houghton, C., & Ellis, J. (2008). *Literature Review: Better Outcomes for Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse: Directions for Good Practice*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

Humphreys, C., Lowe, P., & Williams, S. (2009). Sleep disruption and domestic violence: exploring the interconnections between mothers and children. *Child & Family Social Work, 14*(1), 6-14.

Humphreys, C., & Mullender, A. (2000). Children and Domestic Violence: A Research Overview of the Impact on Children. Retrieved 23rd December, 2008, from www.rip.org.uk

Humphreys, C., Mullender, A., Lowe, P., Hague, G., Abrahams, H., & Hester, M. (2001). Domestic Violence and Child Abuse: Developing Sensitive Policies and Guidance. *Child Abuse Review, 10*, 183-197.

Humphreys, C., Mullender, A., Thiara, R., & Skamballis, A. (2006). 'Talking to My Mum': Developing Communication Between Mothers and Children in the Aftermath of Domestic Violence. *Journal of Social Work, 6*(1), 53-63.

Humphreys, C., & Thiara, R. (2003). Mental Health and Domestic Violence: 'I Call it Symptoms of Abuse'. *British Journal of Social Work, 33*(2), 209-226.

Izzidien, S. (2008). *"I can't tell people what is happening at home": Domestic Abuse within South Asian Communities.* London: NSPCC.

Jaffe, P. G., Wolfe, D. A., & Wilson, S. K. (1990). *Children of Battered Women*. Thousand Oaks, CA Sage Publications.

Jarvis, K. L., Gordon, E. E., & Novaco, R. W. (2005). Psychological Distress of Children and Mothers in Domestic Violence Emergency Shelters. *Journal of Family Violence, 20*(6), 389-402.

Jarvis, K. L., & Novaco, R. W. (2006). Postshelter Adjustment of Children From Violent Families. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21*(8), 1046-1062.

Johnson, M. P. (1995). Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence against Women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57*(2), 283-294.

Johnson, M. P. (2006a). Apples and Oranges in Child Custody Disputes: Intimate Terrorism vs. Situational Couple Violence. *Journal of Child Custody, 2*(4), 43 - 52.

Johnson, M. P. (2006b). Conflict and Control: Gender Symmetry and Asymmetry in Domestic Violence. *Violence Against Women, 12*(11), 1003-1018.

Johnson, M. P., & Ferraro, K. J. (2000). Research on Domestic Violence in the 1990s: Making Distinctions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*(4), 948-963.

Jones, L. P., Gross, E., & Becker, I. (2002). The Characteristics of Domestic Violence Victims in a Child Protective Service Caseload. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 83*, 405-415.

Jouriles, E. N., McDonald, R., Norwood, W. D., Ware, H. S., Spiller, L. C., & Swank, P. R. (1998). Knives, guns and interparent violence: Relations with child behaviour problems. *Journal of Family Psychology, 12*(2), 178-194.

Kantor, G. K., & Jasinski, J. L. (1998). Dynamics and Risk Factors in Partner Violence: A comprehensive review of 20 years of research. In J. L. Jasinski, L. M. Williams & D. Finkelhor (Eds.), *Partner Violence*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Kashani, J. H., & Allan, W. D. (1998). *The impact of family violence on children and adolescents*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kerig, P. K., Fedorowicz, A. E., Brown, C. A., & Warren, M. (2000). Assessment and Intervention for PSTD in Children Exposed to Violence. In R. Geffner, P. G. Jaffe & H. Suderman (Eds.), *Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: Current Issues in Research, Intervention, Prevention and Policy Development*. Binghampton, NY: Haworth Press.

Kershaw, C., Nicholas, S., & Walker, A. (2008). *Crime in England and Wales 2007/08: Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime.* (Home Office Statistical Bulletin). London: Home Office.

Kilby, P., Lanyon, C., Cronin, K., & Sinclair, R. (2003). *Building a Culture of Participation: Involving Children and Young People in Policy, Service Planning, Delivery and Evaluation*. Nottingham: Department of Education and Skills.

Kimmel, M. S. (2002). "Gender Symmetry" in Domestic Violence: A Substantive and Methodological Research Review. *Violence Against Women, 8*(11), 1332-1363.

Kitzmann, K. M., Gaylord, N. K., Holt, A. R., & Kenny, E. D. (2003). Child witnesses to domestic violence: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71*(2), 339-352.

Kolbo, J. R., Blakely, E. H., & Engleman, D. (1996). Children Who Witness Domestic Violence: A Review of Empirical Literature. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 11*(2), 281-293.

Lansdown, G. (2005). *Can you hear me? The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them.* The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Lapierre, S. (2008). Mothering in the context of domestic violence: the pervasiveness of a deficit model of mothering. *Child and Family Social Work, 13*, 454-463.

Laws, S. (2004). *'So You Want to Involve Children in Research?' A toolkit supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against children*. Sweden: Save the Children.

Leneman, L. (1997). `A tyrant and tormentor': violence against wives in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland. *Continuity and Change, 12*(1), 31-54.

Letourneau, N., Fedick, C., & Willms, J. (2007). Mothering and Domestic Violence: A Longitudinal Analysis. *Journal of Family Violence, 22*(8), 649-659.

Levendosky, A. A., Huth-Bocks, A. C., Semel, M. A., & Shapiro, D. L. (2002). Trauma Symptoms in Preschool-Age Children Exposed to Domestic Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 17*(2), 150-164.

Local Government Association. (2006). Vision for Services for Children and Young People affected by Domestic Violence: Guidance to Local Commissioners of Children's Services. Retrieved 16th January 2008, from www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications

Luthar, S. S. (1991). Vulnerability and Resilience: A Study of High-Risk Adolescents. *Child Development, 62*(3), 600-616

Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work. *Child Development, 71*(3), 543–562.

Lyons, E. (2007). Analysing Qualitative Data: Comparative Reflections. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology*. London: Sage.

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 227-238.

Masten, A. S., Best, K. M., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity. *Development and Psychopathology, 2*(04), 425-444.

Mauthner, M. (1997). Methodological Aspects of Collecting Data From Children: Lessons From Three Research Projects. *Children & Society, 11*(1), 16-28.

Maxwell, T. (2007). Reflections on some Ethical Implications of Researching with Primary-aged Children. *Division of Educational and Child Psychology, Debate*(124), 18-24.

Mayall, B. (2000). Conversations with Children: Working with Generational Issues. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*. London: Falmer Press.

McDonald, R., Jouriles, E. N., Tart, C. D., & Minze, L. C. (2009). Children's adjustment problems in families characterized by men's severe violence toward women: Does other family violence matter? *Child Abuse & Neglect, 33*(2), 94-101.

McGee, C. (2000). *Childhood experiences of domestic violence*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.

McIntosh, J. E. (2002). Thought in the face of violence: a child's need. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 26*(3), 229-241.

Mendlinger, S., & Cwikel, J. (2008). Spiralling Between Qualitative and Quantitative Data on Women's Health Behaviours: A Double Helix Model for Mixed Methods. *Qualitative Health Research, 18*(2), 280-293.

Mertens, D. M. (2003). Mixed Methods and the Politics of Human Research: the Transformative-Emancipatory Perspective. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.),

Handbook of Mixed Methods in the Social and Behavioural Sciences. California: Sage.

Mezey, G. C., & Bewley, S. (1997). Domestic violence and pregnancy. *BMJ, 314*(7090), 1295-.

Miedzian, M. (1995). Learning to Be Violent. In E. Peled, P. G. Jaffe & J. L. Edleson (Eds.), *Ending the Cycle of Violence: Community Responses to Children of Battered Women*. London: Sage.

Miedzian, M. (2002). *Boys Will Be Boys: Breaking the Link between Masculinity and Violence*. New York: Lantern Books

Miller, S. L., & Meloy, M. L. (2006). Women's Use of Force: Voices of Women Arrested for Domestic Violence. *Violence Against Women, 12*(1), 89-115.

Mirrlees-Black, C. (1999). *Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire* (Home Office Research Study 191). London: Home Office.

Morley, R., & Mullender, A. (1994). Preventing Domestic Violence to Women. *Crime Prevention Unit Series: Paper No. 48* Retrieved 12th April, 2009, from www.iiav.nl/epublications/1994/Preventing_domestic_violence_to_women.pdf

Morran, D., & Wilson, M. (1996). Confronting Domestic Violence: An Innovative Criminal Justice Response in Scotland. In A. Duff, S. Marshall, R. E. Dobash & R. P. Dobash (Eds.), *Penal Theory and Practice: Tradition and Innovation in Criminal Justice* (pp. 216-227). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Morrison, F. (2009). After Domestic Abuse: Children's Perspectives on Contact with Fathers. *Research Briefing No. 42.* Retrieved 8th Aug, 2009, from www.crfr.ac.uk/pubbriefings.html

Morrow, V., & Richards, M. (1996). The Ethics of Social Research with Children: An Overview. *Children & Society, 10*(2), 90-105.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Mullender, A. (2004). *Tackling Domestic Violence: providing support for children who have witnessed domestic violence* (No. 33). London: Home Office Development and Practice Report

Mullender, A. (Ed.). (2006). *What Children Tell Us: 'He Said He Was Going to Kill Our Mum'*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Mullender, A., & Hague, G. (2001). Women survivors' views. In J. Taylor-Browne (Ed.), *What Works in Reducing Domestic Violence? A Comprehensive Guide for Professionals* London: Whiting and Birch.

Mullender, A., Hague, G., Imam, U., Kelly, L., Malos, E., & Regan, L. (2002). *Children's Perspectives on Domestic Violence*. London: Sage.

Mullender, A., Kelly, L., Hague, G., Malos, E., & Imam, U. (2000). *Children's needs, coping strategies and understanding of woman abuse.* Coventry: Economic and Social Research Council.

Mullender, A., & Morley, R. (Eds.). (1994). *Children living with domestic violence :putting men's abuse of women on the child care agenda* London: Whiting & Birch.

Murrell, A., Christoff, K., & Henning, K. (2007). Characteristics of Domestic Violence Offenders: Associations with Childhood Exposure to Violence. *Journal of Family Violence, 22*(7), 523-532.

National Children's Bureau. (2001). *Including Children in Social Research* (No. 193). London: National Children's Bureau.

O'Keefe, M. (1995). Predictors of Child Abuse in Maritally Violent Families. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 10*(1), 3-25.

Oliver, P. (2008). *Writing Your Thesis* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Pahl, R. (2000). *On Friendship*. Cambridge: Policy Press.

Parker, B., Steeves, R., Anderson, S., & Moran, B. (2004). Uxoricide: A Phenomenological Study of Adult Survivors. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 25*, 133–145.

Patel, P. (2008). Faith in the state? Asian women's struggles for human rights in the U.K. *Feminist Legal Studies, 16*(1), 9-36.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Peled, E. (1998). The Experience of Living with Violence for Preadolescent Children of Battered Women. *Youth Society, 29*(4), 395-430.

Peled, E., Jaffe, P. G., & Edleson, J. L. (1995). Introduction. In E. Peled, P. G. Jaffe & J. L. Edleson (Eds.), *Ending the Cycle of Violence: Community Responses to Children of Battered Women*. London: Sage.

Pence, E., & Paymar, M. (1993). *Education groups for men who batter: The Duluth model.* New York: Springer.

Pink, S. (2001). *Doing Visual Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Povey, D., Coleman, K., Kaiza, P., Hoare, J., & Jansson, K. (2008). *Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2006/07*. London: Home Office.

Radford, L. (2008). The paediatrician's role in safeguarding children and young people exposed to domestic violence. *Paediatrics and Child Health, 18*(12), 535-541.

Radford, L., & Hester, M. (2006). *Mothering Through Domestic Violence*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Reid, K., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2005, January). Exploring Lived Experience. *The Psychologist, 18,* 20-23.

Renner, L. M., & Slack, K. S. (2006). Intimate partner violence and child maltreatment: Understanding intra- and intergenerational connections. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*(6), 599-617.

Respect. (2004). Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Women's Services. Retrieved 8th May, 2009, from www.respect.uk.net/pages/principles-and-standards.html

Reynolds, M. W., Wallace, J., Hill, T. F., Weist, M. D., & Nabors, L. A. (2001). The relationship between gender, depression, and self-esteem in children who have witnessed domestic violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 25*(9), 1201-1206.

Ridge, T. (2003). Listening to Children: Developing a Child-centred Approach to Childhood Poverty in the UK. *Family Matters, 65*, 4-9.

Ridge, T. (2007). It's a Family Affair: Low-Income Children's Perspectives on Maternal Work. *Journal of Social Policy, 36*, 399-416.

Ridge, T., & Millar, J. (2000). Excluding Children: Autonomy, Friendship and the Experience of the Care System. *Social Policy and Administration, 34*(2), 160-175.

Rivett, M., Howarth, E., & Harold, G. (2006). Watching from the Stairs': Towards an Evidence-based Practice in Work with Child Witnesses of Domestic Violence. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 11*(1), 103-125.

Rivett, M., & Kelly, S. (2006). From Awareness to Practice: children, domestic violence and child welfare. *Child Abuse Review, 15*(4), 224-242.

Roberts, H. (2000). Listening to Children: And Hearing Them. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*. London: Falmer Press.

Rossman, B. B. R. (2000). Time Heals All: How Much and for Whom? *Journal of Emotional Abuse, 2*(1), 31-50.

Rutter, M. (2006). Implications of Resilience Concepts for Scientific Understanding. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1094*(Resilience in Children), 1-12.

Saltzman, K. M., Holden, G. W., & Holahan, C. J. (2005). The Psychobiology of Children Exposed to Marital Violence. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 34*(1), 129-139.

Schaffer, H. R. (1998). *Making Decisions about Children: Psychological Questions and Answers*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Scottish Executive. (2000). Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland Retrieved 8th May, 2009, from www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/law/stra-00.asp

Seifer, R. (2003). Young Children with Mentally Ill Parents: Resilient Developmental Systems. In S. S. Luthar (Ed.), *Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shakespeare, T., & Watson, N. (1998). Theoretical Perspectives on Research with Disabled Children. In C. Robinson & K. Stalker (Eds.), *Growing Up With Disability*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Shlonsky, A., & Friend, C. (2007). Child Maltreatment and Domestic Violence Editorial: Current State of Knowledge and Emerging Strategies for Policy and Practice. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention* 7(4).

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods* (pp. 51-80). London: Sage.

Smith, P., K, Smees, R., & Pellegrini, A., D. (2004). Play fighting and real fighting: Using video playback methodology with young children. *Aggressive Behavior, 30*(2), 164-173.

Stafford, A., Stead, J., & Grimes, M. (2007). *The Support Needs of Children and Young People who have to Move Home because of Domestic Abuse*. Edinburgh: Scottish Women's Aid.

Stanczak, G. C. (2007). Introduction: Images, Methodologies and Generating Social Knowledge. In G. C. Stanczak (Ed.), *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society and Representation*. London: Sage.

Stephens, N., McDonald, R., & Jouriles, E. N. (2000). Helping Children who Reside at Shelters for Battered Women: Lessons Learned. In R. Geffner, P. G. Jaffe & H. Suderman (Eds.), *Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: Current Issues in Research, Intervention, Prevention and Policy Development*. Binghampton, NY: Haworth Press.

Sternberg, K. J., Baradaran, L. P., Abbott, C. B., Lamb, M. E., & Guterman, E. (2006). Type of violence, age, and gender differences in the effects of family violence on children's behavior problems: A mega-analysis. *Developmental Review, 26*(1), 89-112.

Sternberg, K. J., Lamb, M. E., Guterman, E., & Abbott, C. B. (2006). Effects of early and later family violence on children's behavior problems and depression: A longitudinal, multi-informant perspective. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*(3), 283-306.

Stover, C., Van Horn, P., & Lieberman, A. (2006). Parental Representations in the Play of Preschool Aged Witnesses of Marital Violence. *Journal of Family Violence, 21*(6), 417-424.

The Children's Rights Alliance for England and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. (2008). *"You feel like you're nothing": The UN Study on Violence Against Children*. London: NSPCC.

Thomas, N., & O'Kane, C. (1998). The Ethics of Participatory Research with Children. *Children & Society, 12*(5), 336-348.

Thompson, M., O'Neill Grace, C., & Cohen, L. J. (2001). *Best Friends, Worst Enemies: Children's Friendships, Popularity and Social Cruelty*. London: Penguin.

UK Parliament. (1998). Data Protection Act. Retrieved 5th February, 2009, from www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga_19980029_en_1

Unicef. (2008). Convention on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved 25th April, 2008, from www.unicef.org/crc/index_understanding.html

United Nations. (1993). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Retrieved 10th May, 2009, from http://www.un.org

Vondra, J., Barnett, D., & Cicchetti, D. (1989). Perceived and actual competence among maltreated and comparison school children. *Development and Psychopathology, 1*(03), 237-255.

Walby, S., & Allen, J. (2004). *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey. Home Office Research Study 276*. London: Home Office.

Walker, J., Crawford, K., & Taylor, F. (2008). Listening to children: gaining a perspective of the experiences of poverty and social exclusion from children and young people of single-parent families. *Health and Social Care in the Community, 16*, 429-436.

Warwick, M. (2004). *Children, Domestic Violence and the Role of Schools: An Exploratory Study*. Unpublished Ph.D. , University of Bristol.

Webster, A., & Bond, T. (2002). Structuring Uncertainty: Developing an Ethical Framework for Professional Practice in Educational Psychology. *Educational and Child Psychology, 19*(1), 16-29.

Webster, A., Coombe, A., & Stacey, L. (2002). *Bitter Legacy: The Emotional Effects of Domestic Violence on Children*. Ilford: Barnardo's.

Welsh Assembly Government. (2005). *Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government,.

Widom, C. S. (1989). Does violence beget violence? A critical examination of the literature. *Psychological Bulletin, 106*(1), 3-28.

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Worrall, A., Boylan, J., & Roberts, D. (2008). SCIE Research briefing 25: Children's and young people's experiences of domestic violence involving adults in a parenting role. Retrieved 25th April, 2009, from www.scie.org.uk

Yardley, L. (2003). Demonstrating Validity in Qualitative Psychology. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods* London: Sage.

Zlotnick, C., Johnson, D. M., & Kohn, R. (2006). Intimate Partner Violence and Long-Term Psychosocial Functioning in a National Sample of American Women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21*(2), 262-275.

Appendix A

The Researcher's Speaking Position

I am a white British female currently completing a Doctorate in Educational Psychology (D.Ed.Psy) whilst working as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in a multi-agency team within Children's Services in the South of England.

I have a BSc (Hons) degree from the University of Plymouth (2001) and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education from the University of West of England (2004). I started the full-time D.Ed.Psy programme at the University of Bristol in 2006. During the first year of the D.Ed.Psy I jointly completed a small-scale research study commissioned by North Somerset Educational Psychology Service called *'Involving Young People with Physical Impairments in Developing Inclusive Practice in Schools'*. During this study we worked with physically disabled children in mainstream secondary schools to identify and explore issues that were important to them and affected their everyday lives.

My career demonstrates a commitment to working with children, their families and those involved in their education and welfare - I have had roles working with children both within social services and education. These have included: a teaching assistant, a social work assistant, a primary school teacher with the additional role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator, and most recently a TEP.

It was within social services that I first worked with children 'at risk' and 'in need' and through my continued work with vulnerable children I became aware of the potentially devastating and long-lasting impacts of domestic violence on both children and their families. Within my role as a TEP the potential impact of domestic violence on children's educational, social, emotional and behavioural development is realised alongside the paucity of support services available for such children. This is despite the increasing realisation that domestic violence is a highly prevalent experience for many children and families.

This research project was first conceived through my professional involvement as a TEP with Women's Aid. This work has included supporting an evaluation of a school-based programme for children who have experience domestic violence, and training focused on raising awareness of the potential effects of domestic violence on children for a range of professionals working with children.

My dedication to working with children has influenced the manner in which I have approached this study. It has been guided by a strong belief in the 'rights of the child' outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Unicef, 2008). These include: the right to protection from abuse and neglect, the right to education, and the right to express an opinion and have that opinion taken into account. It is with this in mind that has ensured that the child remains at the heart of this study.

Appendix B

Contextual Information

This information aims to provide a further understanding of the children's context and situation by expanding upon the basic information given in Table 1 in Chapter 6. Due to the qualitative and interpretative nature of this study it was considered that some contextual information about each of the child participants would enhance the findings, and provide a framework for understanding the researcher's interpretation of the data.

In providing this contextual information there was careful consideration of the ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity that surround this small sample of vulnerable children. It is important to reiterate that in line with the child-centred ethos of this study the only information gathered was from the children themselves. There was no data collected or information gathered from any other sources so all the information about the children's backgrounds and family circumstances the children shared with the researcher during the six sessions. Subsequently as some of the children were more open and willing to share personal and contextual information there may be an imbalance of information *available*.

Due to the sensitive nature of the study and the potential repercussions if the children's identities are uncovered, certain measures have been taken to ensure their anonymity throughout the chapters that follow. These include:

- All names of people or places that could identify the child and their family have been changed or omitted.
- All the children, their siblings and certain key people in their lives have been gender neutralised to prevent any possibly of identification by proxy.
- The term 'sibling' has been used in place of both 'brother' and 'sister'.
- Where it is felt that specific information included may be attributable to a specific child thus threatening possible identification, the term 'participant' has been used instead of the synonym name.

Participant A was seven years old. He was active and loved sport, with both swimming and football as hobbies. He was generally lively and chatty, and enjoyed being funny and making others laugh. He liked watching television and in particular wrestling. He lived with his mother and his older sibling in their family home. He had regular contact with a large extended family and his father.

Participant B was eight years old. His previous hobbies included dancing, swimming and learning to speak his family's first language. He was socially able and enjoyed playing. At the time of his initial involvement in the study he was living with his mother and younger sibling in a refuge in Blogstown. Prior to moving to Blogstown, the family had stayed for a brief period in another town after fleeing the family home. He had an older step-sibling who remained at home with his father. Despite leaving his seemingly comfortable family home and familiar town much support seemed to come from his widely dispersed extended family.

Participant C was nine years old. He enjoyed wrestling and playing computer games. When involved in study he was living with his mother in a refuge in Blogstown. He had two older siblings who had not come to the refuge. There was little reference to other social or family contacts.

Participant D was ten years old and the older sibling to participant A. He enjoyed watching Doctor Who and Pokémon. His hobbies included swimming, reading and writing.

Participant E was 13 years old. At the time of his involvement he was living with his mother in the family home. Prior to this, he had spent two years as a looked after child with the local authority. During this time he had also changed schools twice. He had two younger step-siblings who remained in foster care. He had some contact with his father. He liked animals, had many pets and attended a youth club.

As participants B and C were living a refuge during their involvement in the study a brief examination of their perceptions of this environment is provided in Appendix F to offer further contextual understanding for the current study.

Appendix C

Examples of summary tables of the emergent themes clustered together under the super-ordinate themes of 'friends' and 'being a kid'.

Super-ordinate theme: Friends

Emerging themes	Extract	Location code
Making friends	that's how we met - we knocked into each other and then started beating each other up, then made friends	HB2C01 # 5
Making friends – able to do so quickly – confidence?	have you made some friends? P: um - lots and lots and lots	RG1S00 #2
Making friends – quickly getting a best friend	and my best friend is G	RG1S00 #2
Making friends	G was my first friend, she was my second friend and T was my third friend that I met and then	RG1S00 #4
Best friends – lost since moving to refuge Reality/ fantasy – "fairy land" and "here"	my friend named H she's got a tooth fairy called Fairy Dust and she writes to me and she's my best friend in fairy land I: wow P: and H's my best friend here too [life before the refuge – not any longer]	RGS100 #1
The importance of school friend (W) Ridicule, insult him Untruth? CR: communication	that's W, and in my classroom I: and why did you take a picture of him? P: he begged me to I: he begged you to did he? Is he, what's he like? Tell me about W P: he's a gay man (silly, loud voice) I: is he. Is he a good friend? Or ... P: a bad I: why? P: he begs I: he begs? What does he do? P: yeah begs for stuff I: Begs for stuff, like what sort of stuff? P: money I: money! P: clothes I: does he? P: that's the only clothes he wears I: is it? why's that? P: cos he hasn't got any I: why do you think that is? P: cos I nicked them	RB1J99 #3
School friend – (W) previously insulted Is this an insult or compliment?	this friend of yours W - what shall I put about him? P: W is the maddest of mad	RB1J99 #4
School friend – (W) previously insulted Is this an insult or compliment?	that I'd say W is the gayest of the gay and the maddest of the mad and the gayest of the gay and (unclear)	RB1J99 #6
an insult	I hope he don't find out I called him mad	RB1J99 #4
Named friends	what about friends? were there any friends that you'd	HB2C01 #3

	like to take pictures of, or P: yeah - I've got B, O	
Friend being better than him at snap	he's one of my friends I: ah - he comes up - and do you play snap with him? P: yep I: who wins? P: B I: ah – always? P: yep	HB2C01 #5
Best friend – all his named friends were girls	What about in school - were there any mates you would have liked to take a picture of? P: L? I: Aah is she one of your .... P: best friends	HB3G98 #3
Oldest friend – history/ stability important Friend important – couldn't take a photo	so were there any other than L that you wished you could take or that you'd want in your book? P: G I: G - and who's that P: my oldest friend	HB3G98 #3
Qualities of a good friend "they all stick by my side" "they look after me , play nice"	so what's so special about them, cos they're obviously good friends P: well they all stick by my side I: do they? P: yeah I: tell me what do they do P: well they ..... Oops I did that wrong - well they look after me , play nice	HB3G98 #3
Many friends	I've got loads of friends in my class	HB3G98 #5
Friend – too young to play with him Safe friend for him – not challenging?	that's my, um, my friend L and that's my, his mum I: that's your friend L, whose, how old is he? P: one and a half I: one and a half and does he live here as well? P: yeah I: and he's your friend P: yeah I: do you play with him? P: yeah	RB1J99 #3
Friend in school	if you took it to school, if you'd have remembered, who would you have taken a picture of, or what would you have taken of? P: my friend I: who's your friend? P: Y I: Y, ok – would she have minded do you think? P: not sure	HG2A95 #2
Description of friend	tell me about E, what's she like? P: she's ok. She's quite fun.	HG2A95 #6
Purpose/ reason for being friend	what's special about S cos she's obviously really important P: I don't know, I suppose she has been with me ever since I was a baby	HG2A95 #4
Importance of friends recognised by mother – new friend spent time with them	she's definitely very busy, have you seen her, she went we was at – because my friend G we went somewhere, and was – she was, and I forgot where we went and then my baby sibling yeah, my mum's getting the baby wipes, and my sibling looked both ways and she run forwards and then my friend G said "oh look is anyone getting her?" and then G had to run there, pick her up and get her back, bring her back over to the buggy	RG1S00 #6
Home – not a place to invite friends?	do you ever have friends from school come to your, come to tea or like anything?	HG2A95 #6

Not got any friends to invite? Isolated CR: communication	P: no (quietly) I: why not? P: I don't know I: would you like to? P: I think that [pattern] looks a bit dodgy (changing subject)	

Super-ordinate theme: Being a Kid

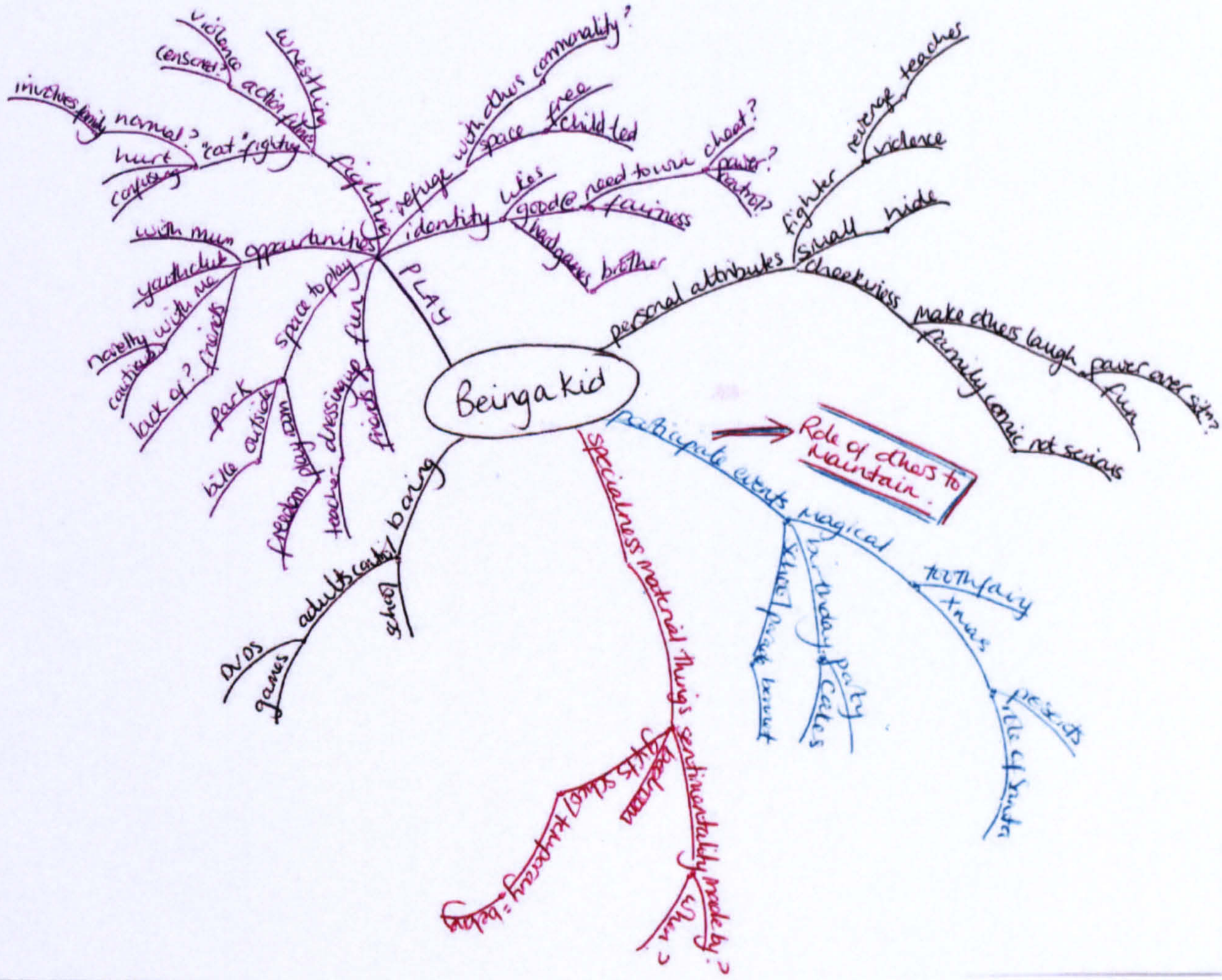
Emerging themes	Extract	Location code
Physical attributes – being small	what do you think it's like being a kid? the best bit? P: you can fit through small gaps	HB2C01 #2
Small – hiding?	there's a place outside that you fit in if you're really small	HB2C01 #2
"	so I'll bet you're good at playing hide and seek P: that's why I like small gaps too I: you can play hide and seek really well, I used to love playing hide and seek P: with skinny gaps like that I can get through easy and X Can't	HB2C01 #2
Cheekiness – fun with adults/ role of a clown (identity?)	every time my teacher says um 'one two three go under', he says where's Y, where's Y and looks up then like I pop up behind him and when he looks round I pop down , jump up behind him again and when he's looking away I swim back to my place	HB2C01 #2
"	all the kids are laughing [following him being silly in swimming lesson]	HB2C01 #2
Being a kid – boring/ not allowed to do adult things	Can you tell me about what you think it's like being a kid? P: I don't know I: Go on, have a go P: It's boring I: why's it boring? P: because you can't watch adult DVDs	RB1J99 #3
"	There's no one, there's nothing to do I: so what would you like to be doing? P: watching, playing 18 year old games	RB1J99 #3
Being a kid not good	are there any cool things about being a kid? P: no I: nothing?! What about school, how's that? P: boring	RB1J99 #3
Dismissive? Limited scope/ ideas	tell me about what it's like being a kid, what would you say? P: fine - it's fun I: it's fun what are the things that are fun about being a kid? What things that you have fun doing? P: I don't really know actually	HB3G98 #2
What it's like being a kid? Violent/ revenge ?	it's been really interesting working with you and you've given me a really good idea of what it's like, to be a kid. So do you think you've forgotten or anything I need to know, that you haven't told me? P: getting in as much fights as you can while you're a kid I: fighting, that's important is it? [no response] so if you move to this house in Z, does that mean you can stay in your school? P: yeah	RB1J99 #6

	I: and that's cool is it, or not cool P: and if you ever, ever want to plan revenge on a teacher do it while you're at school	
Participation in common child orientated events - Halloween	I: have you got a costume for this year? Q: yep I: what are you going to be? Q: werewolf I: a werewolf, that's cool - what about you X? P: I'm not a big fan of dressing up	HB2C01 # 6
Participation in common child orientated events - Tooth fairy/ innocence of believing in magic	and I, um my friend H in [place], said that you should write a letter to your tooth fairy, because I had my tooth come out yeah and she told me to write a letter, that was the first time I wrote a letter and guess what my fairy's name is? I: I don't know P: X and I said, my friend named H he's got a tooth fairy called Y and he writes to me and he's my best friend in fairy land I: wow P: and H's my best friend here too [in life before the refuge – not any longer]	RGS100 #1
Tooth fairy - Sibling joining in the myth/ magic, considering it a real possibility CR: relationships	and when in the night my bigger sibling said, my stepsibling, he said that "oh I saw the tooth fairy, she had a red dress" and I don't know if it was real 'cause he always sometimes says lies to make me laugh	RGS100 #6
Participation in common child orientated events – birthday party Role of friends? Likes the attention/ showman?	oh, my party - I'm going to have a normal party - and everyone's gonna - I'm gonna need four people to help me, no five people to help me - all gonna walk out and we're all gonna make these ghostbuster suits and we're all gonna walk in and all the lights are gonna go off and all these stage lights are gonna be down at the front ....[singing] someone strange will be walking in the room	HB2C01 #3
Participation in common child orientated events - Xmas	um, when I was at my Grandma and Granddad's because over there is in my Grandma and granddads, I went there and then they had a little Christmas tree I: did they? P: and then it was on like a table and then there was lots and lots of presents underneath	RG1S00 #3
Participation in common child orientated events – Xmas Adults buying into the magic Belonging?	I gave him [Santa Claus] milk, I gave him carrots and then I gave him crisps and in the morning um there was presents laying on the floor, one of them was my baby sibling's 'cause they was a different colour than all the others I: right P: than the others and so, and then I looked at the table and the milk was all gone, one bite was in the carrot and he took a few, he ate a few crisps	RG1S00 #3
Participation in common child orientated events – Xmas Adults buying into the magic Belonging? CR: fluidity of life - loss	well what was your old bedroom like? P: it was all purple, and then in the night, I don't know how but when it was, before Christmas day, in the night yeah when I was sleeping yeah, I was sleeping and then suddenly in the morning and my bed changed into a different quilt and that I: wow, and what do you think happened P: Santa Claus did it 'cause he I: Santa Claus managed to P: he still went into my room as well I: wow, and he came to your actual bed you were sleeping in? P: yeah and I how, cos I was sleeping and suddenly my pillow in the morning had purple	RG1S00 #6

	butterflies and blanket with butterfly on and even the bottom bit was purple butterflies and there was a proper butterfly, you know like the princess's thing I; like a P: it's just butterflies, it's not a princess thing I: like a drape thing? P: yeah	
Xmas – believing in magic	when I was in P I definitely, definitely, definitely said can you please open the living room door, open the windows in the living room because it was a big apartment in P [to ensure Santa could get in]	RG1S00 #6

Appendix D

Mind Map created to explore the theme of 'being a kid'.



Appendix E

Reflections on the Research Process

This additional chapter explored how the children interacted with the research process and responded to the methodological approach employed. Although the themes that emerged did not relate to the aims of the research study it was felt that due to the innovative child-centred methods employed such an analysis would be beneficial. The four themes were: creating the images, finding the right things, the role of the researcher, and play as part of the research process.

Creating the Images

To create photographs that captured things that were important, interesting or special required thought and planning from the children. Some of them seemed to respond to this challenge in ways which included asking others to take photographs to include themselves. To create their desired images the children undertook various degrees of preparation. These included preparing subjects, for example giving a toy to a sibling to make him smile or carefully arranging objects. Such preparation reflected the desire of the children to share a particular message with the researcher.

An unusual interpretation of the instructions was illustrated through William's description of one of his photographs. He said *"this was the safety picture when X was holding on to the buggy".* William had interpreted the word *"important"* in its most literal form, meaning safety.

Liam's ability to persuade his unwilling adult friend to pose for a photograph required encouragement from the researcher. His friend was in the house during one session and the following scenario occurred:

Liam:	should I go up and ask?
Researcher:	tell him, it's for my special book and I'd like to take a picture of you
Liam:	he might say no or he might say yes

Liam found the courage to ask his subject again, despite his previous request for a photograph having been rejected. This time his request was rewarded and Liam returned to the researcher proudly, having been granted permission to take the

desired photograph. He explained what had happened when he asked his friend to pose for the photograph, *"he goes, no, I go please, he goes ok, quick"*.

The value of the completed photo-books seemed high for all the children. This was demonstrated immediately through their desire to share them with others, usually their mothers. Some of the children highlighted how they would keep their books in a special place with other treasured items. William outlined his intention: *"I'll keep it as my souvenir"*.

Finding the Right Things

The children seemed to find generating ideas for their photographs quite difficult. In response to being asked what was difficult about taking the photographs, Harry said, *"finding the right things"*. This suggested that he had a perception of hidden expectations and felt that he could possibly fail the task by taking photographs of the wrong things. David had a similar notion and said: *"I got confused at the end about what to take"*. Liam also seemed to hold a desire for his photographs to meet some unknown criteria:

> I was planning to take a picture of the garden, then I was thinking no, 'cos it wouldn't make any sense.

The Role of the Researcher

The rapport that developed between the researcher and the children was based on mutual respect and a desire by the researcher to get to know the children on an individual level. The flexible, child-led approach to the sessions enabled the researcher to be responsive to the children's individual communication styles, interests and personalities. The children seemed pleased when the researcher visited and engaged well in the sessions. By the end of the study they seemed to value the relationship that had developed. This was illustrated by William's desire to include the researcher in his photo-book: he said *"oh yeah, I haven't done a picture of you and me yet"*. Harry showed respect and kindness through insisting that he and his sibling would tidy up following an activity despite the researcher's offer to help:

Harry: ok, we'll clean it up when you're gone
Researcher: I'll help you before I go
Harry: no, we'll clean it up when you're gone; we'll clear it up when you're gone

Contrastingly Liam's tone whilst talking to the researcher often appeared impatient and lacking tolerance:

Researcher: what do you want to be when you're older?
Liam: I've told you this one ... I want to be working with animals (impatient tone)

The role of the researcher as an adult to play with had a positive impact on William. Subsequently, he felt motivated to ask his mother to play a game with him following one visit:

> Because when I went upstairs on the day that you came here ... um, on that day, I was asking my mum could you play with me and she said yes.

Play as Part of the Research Process

As already mentioned all the sessions with the children used play to create a relaxed environment and to make it easier for the children to talk openly. All the children responded well to this approach and were always keen to engage in games and activities with the researcher. Liam enjoyed playing board games and card games with the researcher. However, he had a seemingly overwhelming desire to cheat to increase his chances of winning. This seemed to pervade his ability to enjoy a game played fairly. Liam's cheating behaviour was apparent during all games and he was willing to engage in unfair behaviour even if it meant that he had to let the researcher do the same, thus negating the purpose of cheating:

Researcher: come on, there's no point playing if you are going to cheat
Liam: I'll let you cheat next time ... I'll let you go up that ladder, how about that?

He would often resort to pleading or negotiating with the researcher in an attempt to exert some control over the game:

Liam: ... you need to do that one? [pleading voice]
Researcher: ... I don't want you to win, you're helping me win
Liam: yeah but can you help me out, I'm helping you

Cheating was also a common feature of play with Ben. He too would enter into negotiation with the researcher, *"oh please let me go from there" (pleading).*

However, Ben seemed to have an increased sense of fairness reflected through his use of language, *"I do it fair like from the bottom and the top and the bottom".* Ben's honesty and humour became more common as the sessions continued as he seemed to feel more comfortable:

Researcher:	is it my turn?
Ben:	yep, no mine... you're actually falling for it
Researcher:	are you trying to cheat me?
Ben:	yeah, your turn ... I tricked you twice ... (laughs)

Summary

This additional chapter offered a chance to reflect upon the research process by outlining issues that emerged as significant. Taking photographs presented the children with a challenge to think about and prepare what images they wanted to capture and dealing with falsely anticipated expectations. The value of a sustained relationship developed over a period of time with an interested adult was clear as was the child-centred approach to the sessions. The fun, flexible and responsive interaction between adult and child, researcher and participant, enabled the research process to be enjoyable as well as fruitful.

Appendix F

The Context of Refuge Life

It is acknowledged that refuges can represent a unique and stressful influence on children (Holt et al., 2008) and as such it was felt that a brief exploration of the two participants' perceptions of this home environment would provide further contextual understanding for the current study.

Both children perceived their bedrooms to be unattractive and sparsely furnished: *"it's just like yellow ... and lumpy"* and *" there's three beds and a chest, that's all".* The sleeping arrangements in the refuge meant that they shared their bedroom with other family members. At time they had to deal with the harsh daily practicalities of living in adverse circumstance as illustrated through a description of getting ready for bed:

> Um – it's very cold ... and then in, I've gotta wear leggings and then another pair of um it's like pyjamas, leggings and then pyjamas and then, I've got to wear you know a long neck.

The children were able to consider some aspects of the situation in a positive light. For example, a sense of increased closeness between mother and child with regards to this forced proximity. One said *"I can sleep wherever I want, I can sleep there, there or in mum's bed ... if I want".*

The difficulties associated with refuge life were highlighted for the researcher when during a session the constant crying of a small child could be heard outside the room. The participant said *"and that how he cries"* with acceptance. The sense of the refuge being a secret place where people are fearful did not make it a good place to have visitors, which can increase the isolation already felt by the families.

However, practicalities of living in a refuge, the lack of privacy and personal or family space seemed to be balanced by the sense of community and support between some of the residents. This sense of a community was demonstrated through the children when they played together and during one visit celebrated a birthday.

The notion of belonging to a special community extended beyond the refuge and into school for one of the children. This child seemed to have adopted a caring role for another child from the refuge who attended the same school. He seemed to have a sense of shared understanding about why the other child was finding school life difficult.